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MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BROWN WILLY.

ESTHER fastened two ends of the blanket—a thin one—round her neck, wearing it as a mantle, tucked another end under one arm where she carried the loaf, and started, a reaping hook in her right hand, bound by the handle to a long stick, on her way north-west.

She passed the stream that flows into the Trewortha marsh from the west, and climbed the round hill above it, in the midst of which is an outcrop of sparry granite that bears a fanciful resemblance to a grey mare, and which accordingly bears this name. Esther had arranged with her grandparents that food and sundry articles she might need were to be left for her at intervals among the rocks of the Grey Mare; then she went over a long down sparsely strewn with granite, much skinned accordingly for turf, and away to where, like a white ribbon, the great Bodmin road, the main line of communication in former days between London and Falmouth, crossed hill and dipped into dale in the undulating surface of the moor between the main groups of mountainous outcrops of granite. Here were a few farms clustered about the road, with their inclosures taken from the waste built round with the stones cleared from the ground within.

To the north, in the gathering gloom, but with some of the western halo from the set sun reflected over their barren crests, rose ridge on ridge against the dark north-eastern sky. Already,

under the granite-crowned Garrah, a star shone forth, where in a solitary farm a lamp had been kindled.

Esther crossed the Bodmin road without encountering anyone, and plunged into the wilderness beyond, a wilderness not to be trodden and threaded by daylight by such as are inexperienced and unacquainted with the country, on account of the wide expanses of unfathomed bog occupying old lake basins.

Esther was well aware of the danger, but she knew her direction, knew that the moon was near full and would shortly rise over the ridge to the east; and she was also well acquainted with the position of the dangerous morasses, and of the points where the streams could be crossed, none deep so near their cradle.

Like a dark purpose in a sullen, tortuous mind, the river Fowey wormed its way through the moors. Never seen, hardly heard in its whispering falls, it could not be gathered where it worked and turned, and dived and fretted. Esther kept to the heights, now traversing whole villages of ancient circular huts, some within pounds and fortifications, some outside, at what date tenanted none knew. Now and then she startled a couched moor colt or a heifer, or a frightened curlew with a whirr and scream rose from under her feet. Then she made Tolborough, with its cairn crowning the summit, a chambered cairn with a passage leading into its depths, where dwelt the pixies.

She passed without fear, the Good People had never hurt her. She belonged to them; they would protect her when taking refuge in their domain, their last refuge from the encroaching plough and the sound of church bells. Here she turned and looked back. Darkness had gathered behind her as a misty sable sea flowing in between all the mountain tops to the east, pouring down into the bottoms and filling them with gloom, whilst, silvery and ghostlike, their granite heads still caught the light. But out of this dark shadow she saw Dozmare like a large eye looking up at the night heavens, waiting to see the moon sail above it and to reflect it in its waveless surface; Dozmare, the sole remaining lake of the cluster that once occupied the basins in this upland region. On again, now warily picking her way among the rocks of Coddah and down into the great basin below Brown Willy, where springs rise and the 'old men' had burrowed after tin, and bogs have swelled and overflowed and occupied the ancient works.

A horrible death-like odour rose from the bogs, an odour as of an overcrowded graveyard; and graveyards these vast bogs are, that

have swallowed and contain in their abysses the bones of departed races of beasts that once ranged the moors, and relics of ancient peoples who worked there, and who have disappeared like the elk and urochs, the wolf and hyæna.

Before Esther against the northern sky stood the black mass of the highest of the Cornish ridges, like a mighty wave rolling in on her to submerge her in the trough below. She seated herself on a stone and waited. She dared not go forward into that same trough till light came. As she sat, she was as one in a lost untenanted world. Not a sound of any living being, of a bird, or insect was audible. The outline of the mountain before her was undefined—whether on account of gathering vapour from the Atlantic or in night shadows she could not tell. And now, sitting there in the chill air, in absolute solitude, she begins in her undisciplined mind to ask herself why she was there.

Why, indeed, had she run away, and was hiding, when she had done no harm to anyone?

She had acted on impulse, the first impulse of a warm heart. Few there were who had been kind to her, but among those few was Theresa Curgenven. She had wits enough to know that what Theresa had done might bring her to a shameful death, a death that would heap disgrace on the family to which belonged Justinian and Alice, the only persons she loved outside her grandparents' hovel. But that was not all. She, and she alone, had seen Physic shot. And although with her lack of moral education she had no scruples about speaking and even swearing to what was not the truth, she was afraid lest if brought to cross-examination by 'them lawyer chaps,' the truth might be extorted from her.

The idea of taking the crime on herself had sprung up unprompted in her rude mind as the readiest way of relieving Theresa. She was confident that she could elude pursuit on her native moors. A regiment of soldiers could not catch her—she had a thousand lurking places. She knew that not a moor farmer or his men would 'turn cat-in-the-pan' on her, in other words, betray her whereabouts, should they guess or come to know it, not only because they would dread the vengeance of her grandmother, but because they regarded her as belonging to themselves, the moor-folk, in contradistinction to the lowland people. And, as she sat musing, she laughed merrily and beat her hands together. There was sport in leading the police a wild goose chase, in drawing them off on a false scent. She had not, as a child, played

games with the school children ; now, on the confines of womanhood, she would play such a May-game as was unsurpassed and unsurpassable ; and so, with this game, take farewell of childhood. She had laughed aloud. There was no echo, not the smallest reverbération, her voice went forth into and was lost in space.

But now there was a brightening in the eastern sky, and first a spark, then a flame, then a globe of fire rose above the moors, and a flood of light was poured over the flank of Brown Willy. Not over its five heads, for the crest had, in fact, arrested fog from the Atlantic that blew over it, blew between the points of its comb, arched over the great trough below, which was suffused with silver moonlight, and the vapour above was itself turned into light like the silken streamers of the cotton grass in the marsh.

With a shout of exultation, Esther sprang to her feet, and the full moon flashed from her reaping hook, turning it into a silver crescent.

Down the slope of Coddah Esther went, her feet bounding on the wet turf ; she saw the flash of water in Fowey well, a pool where the river bearing that name is supposed to rise. She almost ran down, for she was chilled with sitting in the cold night air and falling dew, and having reached the bottom crossed it, and began to climb the side of Brown Willy. As she ascended, the silvery streamers of fog were dispersed, and the five-horned head of the mountain stood out illuminated by the moon, turned into silver against the night sky. A steep scramble, and then at length, now glowing in every limb, the girl stood on the summit of the most eastern point. Here rises an immense cairn above some ancient Cornish king. Here the dead man lies with a golden goblet in his hand, and he turns his cup from side to side. When he is thirsty, he turns the bowl to the west, and thereupon the wind blows from the ocean and brings up rain that pours through the chinks of his grave and fills the cup. The dead man holds it till full, and then drinks. If his tongue be slaked, he turns the bowl downward and the wind shifts, the clouds disperse, and the sun shines. But he has his thirsty fits full often, and when they are on him the rain falls incessantly, and the fire that consumes him seems unquenchable.

‘To-night,’ laughed Esther, ‘the ou’d king hev took but a dewdrop in his cup and gone to sleep again.’ Then she descended the further side of the crest, and found what she had come to find, her place of shelter—a house ready built, but untenanted since

the times of the old king of the golden cup, who lay immediately overhead.

This house is a beehive hut composed completely of granite blocks nestling in among the natural rocks, like a swallow's habitation; so like the natural rocks in colour and appearance, that probably ninety-nine persons out of a hundred might pass within a stone's throw of it without observing it. It is completely circular, six feet in diameter within, the walls are perfect, and stand above the paved floor but three feet; and then the roof is drawn together in overlapping courses, except where one huge slab has been thrust over a portion. The little doorway is to this day intact. The house could be entered on hands and knees alone, between granite jambs under a granite lintel. Attached to it is a still smaller beehive hut, that served anciently as store chamber. The hut was indeed the mere skeleton, divested of its original covering of turf that excluded wet and cold, but such as it was Esther was constrained to make it her habitation for the rest of the night.

She had been walking for some hours, and was hungry and tired. She broke off a piece of the loaf she carried and ate it for her supper, then, having wrapped herself up in the blanket, she laid herself in the dryest recess of the hut and was soon asleep.

When morning broke she was shivering with cold. A hasty breakfast was made on her loaf, and then she set to work upon her house to make it rain and wind tight. This was not difficult. She cut up turf and stopped all the chinks between the stones; she cleared out all the peat and mould that had accumulated through some two thousand years on the floor; she reaped heather and strewed it on the pavement to form a bed, and then proceeded to weave rushes for a mat that she could hang over the entrance at night. Upon the roof she heaped turves that she found at the places where the peat cutters had stacked their stores to dry, and had neglected or cast aside as indifferent slabs. The day was thus spent, occupying all her energies and intelligence in the reduction of the size of the loaf.

A fire she dared not kindle, had she possessed the means of lighting one. She was living at the highest point in all Cornwall, at a point commanding two seas. Far away to the south was Plymouth Sound, and gleaming like an arm of fire in the declining sun; to the west was the estuary of the Camel, Padstow Bay. A light at such an elevation would be seen far and wide, and must

attract attention. Only in rain and mist could she venture to kindle one; but, so far, rain and mist had happily not come upon her.

The day was over, and in her beehive hut in the darkness sat Esther, plaiting the rushes to complete her screen. The wind piped and fluttered about the entrance. A soft silvery-grey light was discernible at her narrow doorway. She sang to herself snatches of old ballads her grandmother had taught her; then laid her plaiting down in her lap, unable to proceed in the darkness, and listened to the play of the wind and to the tumble and roar of her own stormy pulses, and think as best she could the thoughts that flashed in her dark mind. They came one on another; now a thought of her grandparents, then of Justinian, next of how she was giving the police the slip, then of the murdered man, and not in order but in a whirl, and dancing over and flashing through them, fancies of the king with his golden cup; of Tregeagle, the giant, who churned Dozmare with his staff till it foamed like a cauldron; of the pixies dancing round the cairn on Tolborough.

Then, suddenly, she was startled by a scream, loud and piercing in her ear, and a flutter near her feet.

She shrank against the stone at her back, drawing her feet under her in terror, and holding her breath.

Glimmering in the dark were a pair of eyes, now flashing, then disappearing like a revolving light at sea.

The moon rose, and a flood of pure light poured in at her doorway, and in that light she saw what had alarmed her, a snowy owl, white in itself, dazzling white in the moonbeam.

It had come to warn her to depart from a haunt it called its own.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ESTHER'S ADVOCATES.

PERCIVAL CURGENVEN, as both magistrate and employer of the deceased Mr. Physic, considered himself bound to take active measures to have the case of the murder cleared up, and the murderess brought to justice. Not that his activity was productive of result. He ran about talking, drove into Liskeard to consult a lawyer, discuss the matter with the superintendent of the police, dine at the ordinary at Webb's Hotel, and make the murder the

subject of discussion at table ; and after having laid strict injunctions on the servants and on Justinian not to mention the matter before his wife, lest it should excite and harm her, was himself the first to transgress, and blurt the whole matter out before her.

There had been a coroner's inquest, and, under the circumstances, with such evidence as was produced before the jury, the verdict was one of murder against Esther Morideg. But then, in this case, as in that of Captain Lambert, and ten thousand others, all the evidence necessary for the direction of coroner and jury into a right finding was not produced.

Justinian was in the smoking room of the Bungalow engaged in trying to get into working order a piece of Captain Lambert's mechanism, a tumbler made to go through numerous and varied evolutions by the fall of sand into buckets of different sizes, rendering the revolutions more or less irregular, and thus changing the attitudes of the tumbler. The toy had been neglected and had got out of order. He had removed the back of the box that contained the mechanism and was studying the contrivance, when a tap at the window pane called off his attention, and he saw the sweet face of Alice looking in at him. He started up, and ran out to her, but met her in the doorway coming in.

'Alice, I have found out the secret of the little man who pirouettes,' said Justinian. 'See—this is how your father managed it. Was it not clever?'

'Oh, never mind that,' said the girl. 'I am so anxious and unhappy about Esther Morideg. I suppose you know that the coroner has given out that she shot Mr. Physic, and I am quite sure it is not true.'

'I *know* it is not true,' said Justinian.

'So do I, but why is all this hue and cry after her when she is innocent?'

'Because they will have it that she shot him. How do you know, Alice, that she is innocent?'

'I am sure of it. She couldn't do it. She is as good-hearted a girl as ever was found ; wild and uneducated of course, but that does not make her wicked. She is not wicked. Justin, I am positive she never did it, because she could not do it.'

'I don't think your reasons convincing.'

'But I know her.'

'So do I. I don't believe she could do it, though the provocation was great.'

‘I am quite positive she did not.’

‘My reasons are better than yours, Alice. I know she is innocent for reasons that do carry conviction with them. You see, men and women have different sorts of intellects. You say she is innocent because you like her and think her a nice sort of a girl; I say so, because I have evidence that exculpates her. That is the difference in sex.’

‘What are your reasons?’

‘Why, this—I know that the pistol was in its place when I came here for my gun. Look, Alice, there is the rack. There is my gun, and there is the governor’s, and do you see that gap below? There is where the pistol was. You know we were at Sir Sampson’s. My stepmother had a fit, or something of the sort, and a servant was sent to recall the governor and me. We came back, and I took the gov.’s gun and put that, as well as mine, here on the rack, and I am positive the pistol was in place. Then, as my stepmother was better, and wished us to go back to the Tregonticks, I came here for the guns again, and the pistol was still in its place. I remember noticing then that it had a cap on, but as the hammer was down, I couldn’t say whether it was an old one or not, I was in too great a hurry to examine at the time. Those owls of police have got the pistol now, and so you see there is a gap in the rack. Well, when I came here for the guns, don’t you think I should have at once noticed had the pistol been away? I don’t know what girls are, whether they are observant or not, but all I can say is that men see these things at once with half an eye. The pistol was in place. I noticed the copper of the cap under the hammer, and determined I’d row the keeper about it, for he ought to have had the pistol cleaned. I could swear to it. And yet these fools have it that Esther carried it off a day or two ago, after having frightened John Thomas with a threat that she would pepper his fat calves with it. It’s rubbish!’

‘But—Justin! why have you not said this? Why did you not let the coroner and the jury know this?’

‘I wasn’t going to appear before a pack of idiots unless specially sent for. Why, Alice, who do you think they had for jury? There was Tonkin, the fellow who has that little omnium gatherum shop, boots and lollipops, groceries and drapery. There was Hicks, who is only a day labourer, and so deaf that he misunderstands everything said to him, and Uglow the butcher. Do you think I, the young squire, was going to come before a parcel of bumpkins

and give evidence? Not I. If there should be a trial, and a respectable jury of educated and intelligent men, I'll go and say my say, but I'm not the man to cast pearls before swine.'

'Oh, Justin! you have done very wrong. Poor Esther is in trouble and danger, and all through you.'

'Not a bit. They are such a pack of stupids, that I knew they would bring in their verdict in defiance of my evidence, if I gave it; and I was not going to submit to that—I, the young squire, indeed! Besides, who is the coroner? He's only old Grimston, who is a second-class lawyer, and the son of an auctioneer, and married the daughter of the cake shop. When there's a proper judge and respectable jury, then I'll say my say.'

'And in the meantime poor Esther is to be hunted and perhaps thrown into prison.'

'Oh! you let Esther take care of herself. What does she care about what old Grimston, and Uglow, and Hicks, and that lot decide concerning her? I wouldn't care a snap myself. Let them say I shot Physic. I should laugh in their faces. Why, Hicks is as stupid as he is deaf. Who cares for their opinion except their wives?'

'But your father thinks Esther is guilty.'

'Yes—it is unfortunate. He is rather—well, he is swayed too much by general opinion, which is what I despise. Indeed, I may say I am convinced that when general opinion sets one way, truth is to be found in the opposite direction.'

'Did you not tell your father about the pistol?'

'Yes, but he did not listen, or give what I said its proper weight. You see unfortunately I am only his son, and a father, I suppose, is always inclined to undervalue a son's opinion and intellect, and so on. Besides, he is rather obstinate, though I say it, and he has made up his mind that Esther killed Physic, and he will stick to his opinion as a matter of principle, just because he has formed his opinion. It is a misfortune when people do not listen to reason, but, after all, they are the sufferers.'

'Not in this case, Justin. It is poor Esther who is the sufferer. What is to be done about her?'

'I don't know.'

'But the truth cannot be arrived at till she is found.'

'Then let them find her.'

'No—do not let her be caught by the police and carried to

gaol, and lie in prison, regarded as a murderess, till the assizes. It would kill her to be confined within stone walls.'

'There is something in that. And that is why she has given them the slip.'

'Yes, but where is she? I wish she could be seen and spoken with, then we would find out something about this. Now everyone says she murdered Mr. Physic, and I don't believe it, and never shall be brought to believe it.'

'Nor will I,' said Justinian.

'Then it is our duty to stand by her, and help her to clear herself. Justin! she is a poor uneducated creature, and quite unable to establish her own innocence. Everyone is against her except you and myself, and you and I must be her advocates, and do what we can to clear her.'

'I should enjoy doing it,' said Justinian, 'if only for the sake of letting the world know that our opinion is worth attending to. And it would teach the governor a salutary lesson, too.'

'Then do something to establish Esther's innocence.'

'What? I am game so soon as the proper authorities are prepared to listen to my evidence.'

'That is not sufficient. You must find Esther out; learn where she is, see her, and get her to tell you what she knows. There is some mystery. It may be she is trying to screen her grandfather. I cannot account for her playing hide-and-seek in any other way. If not that, then something has happened to her.'

'I will do what you wish. If she is in concealment, her grandparents will know. Leave it to me to worm the truth out of them. I understand all that sort of thing better than those blundering owls of police. Of course the Moridegs would tell them nothing—*me*—that's altogether different.'

'Thank you very much, Justin. I am so troubled at heart about the poor girl. I do like her. There is a great deal more in that girl than most people imagine.'

'I'll go directly. Nothing like knocking off a thing at once.'

'Do so—and tell her—tell her, Justin, that nothing will make me believe she did this dreadful thing intentionally. Mamma does not know her as I do.'

Justinian started for Trewortha. He did not ride his cob because the way was very bad, so rough with stones in places, and so boggy in others, that it would have taken him longer to reach the place on horseback than on foot.

As he approached the throat of the valley where the Trewortha Tor throws out its feet against those of Newel Tor on the other side of the stream, he saw the policeman lounging about, as though he had nothing to engage him.

Justin accorded him a supercilious nod and was rushing past, when the constable said, 'Excuse me, sir, but may I ask where you are going?'

'Where I am going?' repeated Justinian haughtily; 'what the deuce is that to you? Do you know who I am? I call this cheek, I do. As if I might not be where I chose. I suppose these moors do not belong to you, Mr. Tregaskis, but are free to anyone to cross?'

'Oh, certainly, sir. Only I was——'

'Only you were wholly unwarranted in asking such a question of me. I take it as impertinence.'

Then Justinian walked on, switching at the heads of fern and gorse, at anything on which he could vent his disgust.

Presently he turned his head over his shoulder and looked back. The constable was following at a distance. He clenched his teeth, stood and hacked at a thistle with his stick till he had hacked it to the ground, looked back, and saw the policeman still coming on.

Then he strode to meet him, and said haughtily, 'Are there not other ways than this to Trewortha? What do you want there? or—may I flatter myself that you are following my traces?'

'I beg pardon, Mr. Justinian; I had no wish to offend, but I have my duty to discharge.'

'Well, and what is that?'

'Why, I have to catch that party, sir—beg pardon—Esther Morideg.'

'Then, why do you not catch her?'

'She is hiding from us.'

'If hiding, why do you come to Trewortha? You are not likely to find her there. Of all owlshness that ever was, there is nothing like that of the rural police!'

The constable was nettled.

'Well, sir, you may say that if you choose. I know very well she is not at Trewortha; but seeing as you was akeeping company with her——'

'What!' Justinian's face became scarlet.

'No offence, sir; I suppose it's no secret. All the country knows that you've been keeping company with Esther, and walking out with her.'

'And so——'

'And so I thought you might perhaps know where she be. And, sir, let me tell you, if you do, it would be better to tell me. No offence, but seeing you coming this way, and thinking you might know, or come to know, where she is, I thought I might take on me to give your honour a caution that it would be a serious matter to assist in any way to conceal her or get her off. It would make you, sir, an accessory.'

'I think this an insufferable piece of impertinence,' said Justinian indignantly. 'To talk of me—of *my* keeping company—and then as an accessory. I'll tell you what it is, Tregaskis; I'll speak to my father, who is a justice of peace, and get your name struck off. It is intolerable to have police so insolent. Turn your nose in another direction, please, and do not dog my footsteps.'

'I must do my duty, sir.'

Justinian swung himself about and proceeded on his way, panting with anger, his brow suffused with colour from shame and indignation. He wished heartily now he had never met with, never condescended to be gracious to a common girl such as Esther. 'Vulgar people will make their vulgar comments; they imagine what does not exist.' He had half a mind now not to proceed, but he had made a promise or given an assurance to Alice that he would see the Moridegs, and so he must go forward.

In no good humour he approached their hovel, and almost ran against Esther coming to it from an opposite direction.

At the same moment that he saw her, so did the constable, who gave a shrill call on his whistle, and began to run. Instantly there started up three more constables from behind rocks and the mounds that marked the sites of prehistoric habitations, and ran also, concentrating on the hut of the Moridegs.

Esther saw that she must be captured if she remained, and she turned. She looked first at one, then at another, of those running towards her before she resolved on her course, and then bounded down the slope and darted out on the marsh.

CHAPTER XLIX

ACROSS THE MARSH.

TREWORTH Marsh is probably unique anywhere. Being an old lake-bed silted up with the wash from the granite tors that surround it on every side, all which granite tors are more or less impregnated with tin, the bed of the lake is to a large extent a settlement of the metal. The ruins of villages of all ages from prehistoric antiquity, which cover the slopes of the hills that dip into the morass, are those of mining peoples of different races and languages, who at different times have sought to recover the sunken treasure.

They have waited till the water was low that they might turn up the bed of the lake; they have toiled at the granite barrier to saw through it and let the water off; they have dammed the streams back that flowed into it; but the lake-bed has never yet been thoroughly explored—never had more than its shoals turned over. Here and there is, as it were, an island in the wide expanse where the water was so shallow that it could be dyked out, and the rubble explored for tin till the metal it yielded was exhausted, or till the dykes gave way, and the water overflowed again and covered all save the heaps of discarded refuse thrown up by the diggers.

But it was not tin alone that Trewortha marsh offered to explorers: it yielded gold as well, though not in large quantities; and a squire whose land stretched up to it in the seventeenth century boasted of the heavy gold rings that he had obtained from the precious ore recovered from the marsh, and gave to his daughters.

The fact of the lake morass having been searched over wherever practicable by man has made its surface most unequal. Here, a little above the level, rises a grey tract of crumbled granite that has been turned over and thrown up. There, again, are depths which the miners at one time by great effort kept dry, and searched till they were abandoned to the dark peat-water again. Here are tracts of quaking swamps that seem fathomless, over which a tripping foot may pass on the green moss, but which will engulf anyone who stands still for a minute. There are courses of dark water too wide to be overleaped and too deep to be waded through.

Into this morass many an ox has run and sunk and disappeared. It is said that men who have ventured to attempt to cross it have perished in like manner. Treacherous, deceptive, a maze to whoever enters it, in one place alone can the moorman pass over it who is aware of its intricacies and acquainted with the secret of the track.

The keen, observant eye of Esther had seen that her sole chance of escape lay in traversing the marsh. A policeman had sprung from behind a rock on the further side of the stream that flowed into the basin, and would pursue her if she attempted the moor on that side. Another had appeared in the direction of the Grey Mare, to intercept her should she endeavour to return by the way she had come; and to run up the stream was not to be thought of, not only because Constable Tregaskis was coming down it, but also because it led in the direction of cultivated and inhabited land. She must return to the depths of the wilderness, and her only way of returning to it was over the surface of the marsh in whose abysses lay the city Tresillan. Happily, she knew the track.

Many a Sunday had she stepped from hummock to hummock of rushes and from spit of rubble to islet of gravel till she had reached that spot in the marsh where, far down, lay the church of Tresillan, whose bells could be heard tolling for service in the dark peat-water; and often had the fancy taken her that she heard the sunken bells.

Esther did not run out far on the marsh before, in full confidence of her security, she turned, folded her arms, and looked at her pursuers.

Three of the constables were making for the morass, from the several places where they had been when they first saw her. Esther laughed. She knew that they could not reach her. Tregaskis was coming after her, following exactly her course. She was not afraid of him. She could throw him out. Then her eye went in search of Justinian, and she saw him running, not towards the marsh, but along its bank, leaping the divisions that marked the old boundaries of paddocks and fields and pounds of the ancient settlers, making in the direction of the Grey Mare. Esther had been obliged to come to the habitation of her grandparents because she had exhausted her provision of food. She had gone, as appointed by her, to the Grey Mare, and had found nothing there. The reason was that the old Moridegs knew that they were

watched; they were well aware that if either of them went to the granite mass called the Grey Mare, he or she would be followed, and the deposit of bread there would be found, and that then an ambush would be laid for Esther. After consultation together they deemed it advisable not to carry anything to the Grey Mare. If Esther discovered nothing there, she would know that they were precluded from visiting the spot, and would make an attempt to obtain food elsewhere. At any rate, it would be a notice to her that her grandparents were prevented from following the arrangement made. Esther had understood this. But food she must have. She might, she knew, venture into some farmhouse or cottage on the moor and beg there; but though the elder inmates might not betray her, yet there was risk from the chatter of the children. She therefore preferred to run the risk of going to her grandfather's habitation, trusting in her own agility and knowledge of the marsh for escape should she be pursued. Unhappily, she had been observed before she had time to obtain from her grandparents what she so much needed.

Esther waited on a heap of 'streamer's' refuse till she saw that Tregaskis was within a stone's throw of her, and then, with a taunt cast back at him, she started again. Light and elastic, her foot not resting for more than a throb of the pulse on the yellow-green surface of moss, she passed over a tract of quaking bog. To reach it she had leaped; for a bog of this description has its margin so fine and filmy as to be incapable of sustaining the weight, whereas a little further on it is dense as velvet-pile. Across this Esther literally danced. She turned her head for a moment over her shoulder, and in that moment saw the constable disappear. He had attempted to follow her on the quaking bog, and had gone in. He sank at once to the armpits, and only saved himself from going under altogether by throwing out his arms and clutching at the moss.

Being in, to extricate himself was not possible. He must shout to his fellows to bring poles to lay across from the more solid ground upon the bog, by which he might clamber out.

Another of the constables was running in bewildered fashion up and down a tongue of rushy land that was a peninsula, with a wide reach of unfathomable bog-water on every side of it save that by which he had come out upon it. Advance was impossible. A third had come to the conclusion that he could not thread the

mazes of the swamp, and was endeavouring to return to the mainland, but could not find how to retrace his steps.

Meanwhile the old Moridegs—Roger, with pipe in mouth and hands thrust into his pockets, and Tamsin, with a scarlet kerchief tied round her throat, were standing outside their hovel, watching the proceeding with a stolidity that seemed indifference. Esther saw by a movement of her grandmother's arm that she desired to catch her attention. She stood still, and detected that she pointed hastily to the Grey Mare.

No sooner did Esther perceive this, than she bent her steps in a different direction, so as to deceive her pursuers as to where she purposed leaving the marsh.

As she went on, she disturbed many wild fowl that had made of this region their home and breeding-place. In 1680, an old squire who lived at Trebartha Hall, the nearest residence of a gentleman, composed a poem on the charms of his place, and did not forget to celebrate the virtues of the great marsh :

To fine fowling he that is a lover
Of that delightful sport
Let him streight here resort.
He cannot miss of duck, cock, tail [teal], and plover,
Widgeon, nor wild goose, hearn [heron], and snite [snipe],
Nor dove, nor thrush, nor hatterflight [jacksnipe],
Heathpoult, nor partridge, nay, nor pheasant.
If this don't please, I know not what is pleasant.

In one place Esther came across the horns of an ox protruding from the bog. The brute had got in, and had sunk, holding up its head with the nostrils above the inclosing peat, till that had covered them, then it had suffocated, but had not sunk further, and the white horns still gleamed out of the grey moss that formed a film over the treacherous surface. Toads, water-voles, leaped into the ooze as she disturbed them, or wild duck whirled away.

At length Esther came upon an islet of rubble on which were cairns and mounds, marking temporary habitations of searchers for gold or tin, who had remained on the spot instead of returning nightly to the mainland through the dangerous swamp. From this place she could see that the constables had recovered Tregaskis from his dangerous position, and were making towards that point on the margin where they conjectured Esther would leave the morass for the bank.

She made her way on in the same course as before, till she came within a bowshot of the margin, when she turned sharply

round, retraced her steps over the morass, and sped as fast as she could towards the north, took the one ford over the stream that wormed its way through Trewortha, and reached a long arm of firm land that ran into the morass, and was crowned by two barrows, under which lay some of the dead who had once toiled for gold or tin in the marsh. This arm was so slightly raised above the water, that to such as did not know the contour of the land it was overlooked, yet, having reached it, an immense advantage was gained by Esther, as she was able to run along on it as fast as her feet could carry her, without any impediment to stay her. By this means she reached easily the main bank of moorland, whereas her pursuers were left a mile in the rear, and moreover to reach her had to make a difficult circuit.

Relaxing her speed, she now ascended the down, among the tufts of whortle, and whin, and heather, at her leisure, till she reached the Grey Mare, where she found Justinian, who had made for it in a direct line, at the recommendation of Roger Morideg. He was lying with his back against the rock, and was behind it.

'Look here, Esther,' said he, 'I have brought you a loaf your grandfather gave me. He told me to come to this point. I don't half like it, though. You see, my father is a magistrate, and it looks ugly for me to connive at your escape. Of course I don't believe you have murdered old Physic, and what is more, Alice has commissioned me to tell you that she believes you are innocent. All the same, I don't like to seem to favour your escape from the police.'

'Her says I never killed 'n?' Esther tossed her head.

'Yes,' said Justinian. 'My cousin, Miss Alice Curgenven'—he had before said 'Alice,' and regretted it; he now gave her her proper title—'my cousin, Miss Alice, has enjoined me to assure you that nothing will ever make her believe that you committed the crime. I myself——'

'You don't think me that wicked, do y'?'

'No, I do not. I know very well that there is a mistake somewhere, but where, I am at present unprepared to say.'

'So'—Esther was pleased, and smiled—'so you and Miss Alice sez Esther bain't so bad as folks say.'

'Exactly. Only we do not understand your conduct in running away.'

'And she—what does she say?'

'Whom do you mean by *she*?'

'Why, sure—who but your stepmother?'

'I don't think she has said anything about it. She has been, and is still, very unwell. She has not been out of her room for some days.'

'Look y' here,' said Esther, laying hold of Justinian by the arm, and speaking with vehemence. 'You mind and say to her just what I tells to you. You go to her and say: "Esther—her'll die game and never speak." Do y' understand now?'

'I don't understand. I don't see how I can. I will say this to her, but I'd like to know what concern it is to her. What have you to do with Mrs. Curgenven?'

'Ay—she loves me.'

'Does she? That's news. Now, Esther, I can't stay here. See—the men, those police fellows are concentrating on this spot. In a quarter of an hour they will be on you, and I particularly do not wish to have been observed in conversation with you. I have already had to undergo insolence and annoyance. Esther—tell me. How came this affair about? Unless you know something about it and had some hand in it or other—though, as I said, I entirely disbelieve in you having done it—why are you in hiding from the police?'

'I do know about it, and I don't want to say naught.'

'Did your grandfather shoot Physic?'

'You heard,' answered Esther, turning sullen, 'I ain't a going to say nothing about it. I've took it on myself, and that's enough.'

'Do you mean to tell me you have taken the charge of murder on yourself to screen another?'

Esther moved from foot to foot impatiently and uneasily.

'I won't say nothing. There now. If I gets snared in everything I sez, mere talking wi' you, how'd it be if lawyer fellers were to set on me and worrit me? They'd have it all out in ten minutes.'

'In ten minutes you'll be in the hands of the police, and then the lawyers, if you will, will be on you.'

'Them perlice!' laughed Esther. 'They'll never touch me. Look. I'll climb up a' top o' the Grey Mare. I'll stand there, and let 'em all see me, and come runnin' on up hill and try to ketch me, and just to the last I'll give 'em the slip.'

'But I do not wish to be seen, myself.'

'They sha'n't see you neither.'

'How will you manage that?'

'Wait and see.' She ascended the rock, and standing against the grey sky waved her hands and shouted defiantly. Justinian, who was concealed behind the rock, looked out cautiously, and saw that a couple of men were approaching. He was greatly annoyed, alarmed, and incensed; the girl had shown herself, and he must infallibly be seen either where he was, or running away as soon as she fled. She might run faster than her pursuers, but he himself would be recognised, and might get into trouble for having been with her without making an attempt to detain her.

'It's coming!' shouted Esther, looking down on him.

'Confounded bother it is. I wish I'd never concerned myself to bring you the loaf.'

He could hear the call of Tregaskis to Esther to stand and give herself up.

In another moment—suddenly—he, Esther, the rock were wrapped in a moor fog, dense as a pall of cotton wool. Esther sprang off the Grey Mare and came to him.

'There,' said she, 'I told you so. The pisgies—the Good Folk'd never let them take me. I seed 'n coming. I seed 'n first come ower Brown Willy, then her came along Hendra, and I were sure nigh to a minute when her'd be on us. Now come along wi' me. I'll take you away to where you can get your road home, and I can be off to my place o' hiding. You may walk now bowld as i' the streets of Liskeard, and no one 'll never see you, if they was five paces off.' Esther laughed. 'Do they think to take me on the moor? They'll never do it. They canna' do it.'

She walked on with Justinian a little way through the mist, and then stood still.

'Gran'fer cannot come to the Grey Mare wi' bread for me, and I must ha' some'ut to eat. Whatever is to be done? I'll get along with this you've given me a bit. After that I must ha' more, and where is it to be brought to? They're watching gran'fer and gran'mother I reckon. Oh, dear! what shall I do? Now so—I'll tell y' where it is. If I'm wanted, go to the top o' Brown Willy. I trust you—I'll trust no other. If I'm to live—I must have bread; if I gets none—why I reckon I shall starve. But you don't forget what I said. Tell her—I'll die game and say naught.'

She bounded away and was lost in the mist. Justinian found himself by a granite post that he recognised and by a track the direction of which he knew,

CHAPTER L.

A¹ CONFIDENCE.

JUSTINIAN entered Theresa's room, and going over to the fireplace stood with his back to it. She was sitting some way from the hearth, near the middle of the apartment, in her arm-chair, listless, doing nothing. She wore a dark blue velvet loose dress, with lace frills about the throat and sleeves. Her face was almost as white as the lace, and her eyes as dark as the velvet.

The boy had not seen much of her during the last few days, and he had sufficient observation to note, and sufficient feeling to be startled, at the change in her. The face was thinner, the features sharper, the hue more deathly. All energy and brightness were gone out of her. Percival was by nature sanguine, and he either did not notice what was clear to the boy, or he considered it as of no real import. Not that he did not love his wife, he loved her so much that he would not allow that she was seriously ill. Love takes one form or other, of exaggerating or of minimising, the danger of the person loved.

Anxiety was wearing out Theresa, as well as actual sickness, or rather the anxiety induced sickness, and then enfeebled her, so that she was unable to shake it off.

She had hoped, when she consented to be Percival's wife, that the struggle for existence was terminated, and that for the remainder of her days she might be able to bask in the sense of security and in assured comforts. No more holding of the door against the wolf that sought to break in, with a knowledge that the slightest relaxation of muscle, abatement of tension of effort, would leave her a prey of the ravening monster. No more struggle against failing powers and the weariness of exhausted endeavour; no more occupation of debatable land with sword and bow, without camp behind on which to fall back. Such had been her expectation when she married. And she had been disappointed in her anticipation. Her position she had acquired was menaced, was precarious, and she had been forced to make an attempt to secure it which had led to a terrible casualty, from the consequences of which she was not safe.

The thoughts of what she had done, vain repinings that she had not acted otherwise, dread of the catastrophe when the truth

was known, uncertainty how to meet it, all wore her, almost paralysed her. It was not that she cared much what happened to herself. Life had lost all its charms for her. When she was married and came to Curgenven, life had burst into flower, and the future gleamed before her full of tranquil, sunny blessedness. A blight had fallen on her hope. Her only solicitude was for Percival and the family into which she had been taken up. He had been kind to her, he had done what he could for her, he had been a helper out of her distress; and she could not endure the thought that by her means disgrace and trouble should fall on his loved head. She thought and thought, but could see no way out of her embarrassment, no gleam of light on her darkness.

'Stepmother,' said Justinian, 'whom do you suppose I have seen and chatted with?'

She looked up at him, patiently, without inquiry in her eyes or on her lips.

'And I am the bearer to you of a most unintelligible message.'

'To me?' she spoke, without tone of interest in her voice.

'Yes; I have actually had a few words with Esther Morideg.'

A sudden flush rose to Theresa's cheeks, and her hands trembled as she laid them on the arms of her chair and raised herself from her supine position.

'Yes, stepmother, I have. It ought not to have been. There is a warrant out against her, and the police are chivying her like a hare. I dare say it was all wrong. I ought to have stopped and held her till the constables came up; but I'm not the sort of fellow to care to play amateur bobby, so I didn't do it. I was not born to be a policeman, nor have the inclination to become one. The blue-bottles are paid to do their work, let them do it. I don't care what the law may be, I won't stoop to that sort of mean work. The fact was, Alice sent me to the Moridegs to see if I could learn where Esther was, so as to convey a message to her. Alice is a chivalrous little Don Quixote of the feminine gender, and will not believe that Esther is guilty.'

'No, she is not guilty.'

'I know she is not,' pursued Justinian. 'I have evidence that she is innocent, for I saw the pistol in its place when I went for my gun. And I'm glad to hear that you take the same view as Alice and me. I wish the governor did, but he is too impetuous in jumping at conclusions to arrive at right ones. Well, stepmother, I found that the Moridegs were closely watched, and that they were

unable to take food to Esther at the place appointed, and so she came herself after it. Then that impudent monkey Tregaskis and some other fellows gave her chase, and I let them run, I knew Esther could distance them, and old Roger begged me take the loaf for Esther to the Grey Mare, and I did so. I did not exactly want to speak with her. As she is under suspicion, and a warrant out against her, I did not like to seem to help in getting her away, and help of course I did when I took her bread; but then, on the other hand, I couldn't be such a cad as to refuse. Well, Esther threw all those fellows out who were in pursuit and came to the Grey Mare, and I gave her the loaf. I had promised Alice, if possible, to see the girl and give to her Alice's assurance of confidence, and so, of course, having promised, I had to do it. If I made myself amenable to the laws, all I can say is, the laws be blowed.' Justinian straightened his back and looked consequential. 'Then Esther gave me a queer message to you. She said I was to tell you she'd die game and hold her tongue, or something to that effect. But hang me if I can make any sense of it. Why is it she wants you to know that she will not tell?'

Theresa, who had been listening with quivering attention, sank back in her chair, closed her hand, and in a faint voice answered, 'I cannot say.'

'Of course not,' said Justinian, 'nor anyone else. But the whole affair is an enigma to me. Why is Esther cutting about on the moors, half starved, and hiding—goodness only knows where—when there is no occasion? She never shot Physic. He did it himself. His wicked conscience for once spoke; and I'll tell you what, stepmother, the explanation will come soon enough, as soon as ever his affairs are looked into. It will be discovered that he has been making away with some of the moneys for which he was accountable. I dare be sworn that he has taken handfuls of Curgenven rents and has poured them into his own pocket. The boss never looks into accounts, he takes all on trust. And what Physic has done to my father he has done to others. I should not be surprised if Sir Sampson had frightened him. There was some talk at Cartuthers about Physic and his accounts, and Sir Sampson said he was going to take his affairs out of Physic's hands now that Physic had taken to mining speculations. He advised the governor to do the same. Well, my theory of this business is that old Physic found his iniquities were coming to light, and afraid of conviction and transportation, he took a dose of lead. Why, stepmother, I've

heard the gardener say he saw Physic come this way, and go towards the Bungalow not an hour—hardly above half an hour before he shot himself. That is the explanation. He came here, found no one in, went to the Bungalow, took the pistol, and he had so much gentility in him as not to shoot himself on our grounds, but out on the moor. Mark my words—that is the true story, and all these owls of police, and magistrates, and my father, and everyone else will come round in the end to my opinion. Those fellows never see further than the extremity of their noses. I don't mean the governor—he is led by the rest; I mean Tregaskis and idiots of his calibre—and they are cheeky too.'

'Do you think they will not take Esther?' Theresa half rose in her chair. She had put together her hands, thin white hands they were, she opened them, and then clasped them again to conceal their vibration.

'How can I tell? Not whilst they have such unintelligent fellows as Tregaskis after her. But she cannot go on for ever hiding. The moors don't stretch out into infinity, nor can she go on to eternity without food. How anything is to be conveyed to her, I do not know. Her grandparents dare not venture to convey bread to her, and the Grey Mare is now blown upon. I don't mind telling you that *I* know the whereabouts of her hiding place, but old Roger can't take food there, or all those blue-bottles will be after him like what they are—blue-bottles.'

'She must have something taken to her.'

'I don't see it. If she is innocent, let her surrender. No harm can come of it. It's all moonshine and nonsense. She is frightened, because she is half a savage, and does not want to be locked up for a bit; she is afraid of that, just as any wild bird would be afraid of a cage, and hate the notion of being clapped into one. But, bless you, it's only for a night or two; I could get her out like a shot with the evidence I could produce in the court. If I had had time at the Grey Mare, I'd have told her so.'

'Oh, Justin, do see that she has what she needs.'

'That is all very fine. I'm to carry her crumbs, but I want to know why? If she's innocent, let her come forward and trust to me to get her off.'

'There may be more behind—something she does not wish to say.'

'I don't believe it. What can there be behind? I have told you I know exactly how it all came about. She may possibly have

seen old Physic kill himself, and she, in her ignorance, supposes that this may compromise her—that is all.’

‘She must be helped. She cannot remain in hiding for always.’

‘Let her come out and clear herself, I say.’

Theresa’s heart beat rapidly. She could no longer endure the burden of her secret, no longer bear to have no one whom she could consult, and who might assist her in her difficulties. She dared not confide the truth to her husband. It was from him, above all, that she desired it should be kept concealed. She had tried the rector in a much lighter matter, and he had proved his reluctance to help her. She had no one else to whom she could put out her hand but this boy, who, with his self-assurance, his energy, and his sound heart could serve her in her need. She made an attempt to stand up, but her strength was not equal to the effort.

‘Shall I assist you, stepmother?’

Justinian came to her and took her by both hands, and she rose to her feet. Something of her former vigour revived in her.

‘Justin,’ said she, ‘I must say to you what I could not say to another. I did it!’

‘Did what?’

‘I shot Physic!’

He let go her hands and sprang back with an exclamation of horror.

‘It is true. I did not intend to do it. It was an accident. But for all that—I did it.’

Justinian stared at her, speechless in his dismay.

‘Esther saw what took place, and she has run away, mainly that she may not have to appear in evidence against me. I would not have your dear, dear father know this for worlds. Now you understand what was meant by the message of Esther to me. She is a faithful girl, infinitely grateful for the little kindness I have shown her. I assure you—I do assure you—it was an accident.’

Justinian was still too shocked to speak.

‘I can bear the sense of what I have done no longer without speaking, and I want your help. Esther must be got away. Should she be taken, then I must tell all, and there is something behind I do not wish to tell, something that would greatly affect all your prospects. There is but one hope—that Esther may be got away. Then the matter can remain unexposed. Do not ask for

more information. Let it suffice that I did it, that Esther is screening me, and that for your father's sake, for the sake of the Curgenven family, the real truth must be concealed.'

Justinian had recovered himself by this time; he took a turn up and down the room, then went to the window and looked out. The day had closed in rain, in cloud and rain intermingled, that gave prospect of continuance for some days.

'I see,' said he. 'If you put the matter in my hands I'll manage it. Of course she must be given the means of getting away. Have you any money?'

'Yes—a few pounds.'

'That will do to begin with. I will see her; I must go where she is to be found, and take her something to eat, and I'll manage somehow. I think I might contrive to get her off to the Sandwich Islands. I'll turn it over in my head, don't concern yourself about it. I am glad you did not apply to my father, he'd have lost his head over it at once. The only point to be really considered is which of the Sandwich Islands to send her to. I forget in which the volcano is, of course she must not go to that. She will be in her element there—all savages together. What is the name of the volcano? Kea-Roa?—I forget. I'll ask Alice.'

CHAPTER LI.

CAPTURED.

JUSTINIAN did not go in quest of Esther the day that ensued for two reasons. In the first place, it was a day of incessant heavy rain. In the next, his project of sending the girl to the Sandwich Islands, on riper consideration, did not appear feasible.

The young fellow, after he had recovered the consternation into which he was cast by learning that his stepmother was the actual person who had shot Physic—and this recovery was not a long, protracted affair—was not dissatisfied at having a heavy responsibility laid on him. As he put it to himself, his stepmother had done the wisest thing possible in trusting him with the secret, as no one else in the world was so capable as himself of helping her out of her difficulties.

Dashed at first in his self-assurance at finding that his admirably elaborated explanation of the mystery of the death of

Physic was groundless, he speedily recovered his self-confidence in the gratification of knowing that he alone was in the possession of the facts, and that placed him in a position of superiority to magistrates and police and the public in general.

After having cudgelled his brains as to the best method of disposing of Esther where she might be secure from pursuit, he remembered a boy acquaintance—the son of the parson at Clovelly in North Devon, and he wrote him a characteristic letter:—

‘DEAR BOB,—I want you to do me a favour. There is a girl who can climb, like a goat, anywhere, and I want her to collect birds’ eggs for me at Lundy. You knew I was making a collection four years ago, when you were at the grammar school at Liskeard. Well, Doctor Jenkins, you know, promised me his collection, and he gave it me. There were a lot of awfully jolly sea-birds’ eggs in it. Well, he did a thing of which I don’t approve. Five days after, he took it back, and gave it to another chap—that little sneak Williams, you remember him? I think I behaved like a gentleman in that I did not shake the box and break all the eggs before I gave it up; but then I am a gentleman, you know. The Curgenvens always are that, if nothing else. As to young Williams, he is a cad. He never gave me one of the eggs. For one thing, I would not have taken any had he offered them. The school has gone down awfully since that affair of the eggs. And now I hear it is not thought anything of except by the shoppies, who send their cubs to it. That affair disgusted me rather with egg collecting. But I am going to begin at it again. They are starting a museum at Liskeard, and I fancy it is the thing for us Curgenvens to be the principal benefactors and patrons, so I shall give it my collection of birds’ eggs when I have got one, and for that reason I want a lot from Lundy Isle. I have considered and send you a sort of a wild girl, and I want you to put her across to Lundy Isle, and leave her there as long as she thinks necessary in order to collect birds’ eggs for me. I have a pair of guillemots, but I want more, and they of all sorts. This girl will go anywhere over the cliffs. I shall send her across country. My notion is to drive her part of the way, and then let her work along as best she can. I shall provide her with enough money to pay expenses. Don’t say anything about this to anyone. I particularly want it to be kept secret. I don’t want it to come to the ears of anyone in Liskeard, that they may be thrown off their balance when they

learn as a surprise the munificent benefaction. So, dear Bob, mind and do what I ask you for the sake of old times, and get that girl put across at once to Lundy Isle, and leave her there, birds'-nesting, till I tell you she may be shipped back again.

'Vale, old chap.'

Justinian despatched this letter, and congratulated himself on having formed so plausible an excuse for sending the girl to Lundy, without having been obliged to state anything that was not strictly true.

The second day was as rainy as that preceding it. The skies were blurred over with formless cloud. The wind was in the south-west. The leaves turned up their lower sides to the wind; rills formed by the side of the gravel walks and washed the gravel away, pools stood on the terrace. A hateful day to be out, thought Justinian; but then, with compunction, he considered how doubly hateful it must be to the poor girl on the moor, crouching in some wretched place of concealment, exposed to the drive of the rain and the rush of the wind. At lunch, when he ate his cutlet and mashed potatoes, and drank his glass of claret, his conscience stung him, that he was pampered whilst she was starving—she had had but one loaf, and that must by this time be consumed.

What should he do? Would he find Esther if he went in quest of her? But was he justified in delaying the execution of his design? Was not this detestable weather the very best for his purpose? Those owls of police, as Justinian said to himself, would never wet their shins on such a day as that, hunting up the unfortunate Esther on the moors, exposed to the worst of the weather. When he had sat for some time brooding in the smoking-room with his father, answering the remarks of the latter shortly, and looking into the fire, he said suddenly: 'Governor! I don't fancy you have any idea how ill stepmother is. You take it all ghastly easy, but I believe she is wasting away. Every day she looks worse. I don't like it at all. That old humbug, the Lis-keard doctor, is not enough; if I were you I'd send to Plymouth. Indeed, I wish you would do it for my sake, for I am uneasy about her. She is a different-looking woman altogether from what she was when she first came here.'

'You don't mean to say so!' said Percival Curgenven, starting.

up. 'I'll drive into Liskeard and telegraph at once. Why did you not tell me this before?'

'Why, governor, you have eyes as well as I.'

'I'll go at once.'

He rang the bell; and when the servant answered—'Tell George to get the dogcart ready at once. He is to accompany me to Liskeard,' said Percival.

'And,' added Justinian, 'tell James to have my cob put into the cart—also at once.'

'Where are you going, Justin?'

'After birds' eggs—anywhere. I won't stick in any longer on such a day as this.'

'Then come with me.'

'I can't, governor; I want particularly to go somewhere else.'

It was not a gracious speech. He felt it was not, so he altered his tone and said, 'The fact is I have written to Bob Rawley about some eggs, and there's a matter connected with my letter I must attend to.'

'Shall you take James with you?'

'No; I shall go alone.'

'Well, I'll go upstairs and see your stepmother. By Jove, I'd no notion she was so bad. I don't know what I should do were——' His voice trembled, and he ran out of the room to conceal his emotion.

Justinian then got the housekeeper to put together some food, and had difficulty in framing a reason. She brought a small package of sandwiches. That, of course, would not suffice. He must have double, three times the amount. Should she put him up a flask of sherry? Yes; and a loaf of bread and some cheese—cake also. He might want it or might not. Wasn't sure he should come back that night. Anyhow, no harm done if there were too much food—he could chuck it away, or give it to some who needed it. Justinian was accustomed to be open in all he did, and he was clumsy over his excuses. He had much better have made none—simply given his orders and no explanation with them. But this did not occur to him till he had bungled at putting his demands in a plausible form.

Then he wrapped himself in a waterproof and drove away. He had a long journey before him. He must skirt the moors on their western flank, and when he reached the main artery of traffic

with West Cornwall, either follow it over the Bodmin moors to an inn called the Jamaica Tavern, leave his trap there, and thence strike north over the waste, or else still skirt the moors till he reached the watershed between the Atlantic and the English Channel, put his horse in at a farm, and thence strike west. He was doubtful which course to take, and had not made up his mind when, with steaming cob and himself in a soaked condition, his waterproof notwithstanding, he drew up at a little hostelry called Five Lanes, where he reached the main road, and where the decision must be taken.

To his infinite annoyance, he saw in the doorway the face of the policeman Tregaskis, who, however, at once dived into the kitchen of the tavern, and Justinian trusted that he had not been recognised. 'If he has seen me,' said the young fellow, 'he is too big an ass to draw any conclusions from it.'

He had turned the cob to the door, but now, instead of halting to give it a mouthful of corn, he impatiently whipped the brute, turned away from the inn, and drove down the steep lane leading from the main road to the village of Altarnun. He was moved to take this way, as that in which he was least likely to be observed on leaving the door of the Five Lanes Inn. 'That's how the public money is spent,' growled Justinian. 'That police fellow goes loafing about and looking in wherever there is a pretty girl, and sits and toasts himself by the fire, ogling her and talking soft-sawder. And we have to pay for it all. It is too disgusting! I wish I were a magistrate. I'd make them caper, like the old fellow on hot plates in "Sandford and Merton." But I shall be some day, and then let them look out—that's all.' He lashed the cob as though it were a policeman he were stinging to his duty.

The road was narrow, and was an almost continuous ascent for three miles. The cob must walk, all collar work, no trotting ground.

'If it had not been for that pig Tregaskis, I'd have walked,' grumbled Justinian, 'and done it in half the time. A horse is about the slowest of any living creatures, after a slug, when walking. Why should that fellow have gone to Five Lanes?—and just now. I don't suppose he spends three farthings for the good of the house. Had I put in there, it would have been half-a-crown into Mrs. Bone's pocket. Now she's half-a-crown short, and all along of that bobby.'

Justinian was not in a good humour. The wet had spoiled

whatever amiability had been in him when he started. The waterproof had served to conduct all the rain that fell on his hat and back down to the cushion and had saturated that, so that he was sitting on a sodden sponge. Moreover, he was facing the driving rain, and the driving rain penetrated up his sleeves, and went in under his chin, soaked his shirt, and sopped his collar.

He had resolved what to do. He would take Esther, if he found her, and drive her across country to Bude, see that she was settled in somewhere there, and arrange for her to go on by the coach next day to Clovelly.

If he did that he could not get home the same day, that was not possible. The cob could not stand such a stretch in wet weather.

‘It will be disgustingly compromising, hang it! Good gracious! what would the boss say if he heard of it?—or the police? Hang it! I wish I were well out of it, but I can’t help myself. I’ve undertaken the job, and I must go through with it. I’ll put up at Trevillian’s Gate; there is a farm there, and I know the old chap. He’ll give the cob a feed and wipe down, and I’ll make Esther walk along the road, and pick her up, so that they won’t see us start together in the direction of Bude, which might astonish their minds.’

He arrived at Trevillian’s Gate, and got the farmer to attend to the horse. Then he started off over the downs in the direction of Brown Willy. This mountain stood behind another, a bolder ridge—Rough Tor—and this had to be ascended or circumvented before the object of his journey was attained. The farmer was not a little surprised at the young gentleman coming there and starting thence, on such a day, for a moor ramble. He asked a number of questions—wanted to know Justinian’s purpose, the point to which he was going, how long he would be away, what were the contents of his package, whether his society as a companion would be acceptable; if not, whether his boy had not better accompany Justinian, to guide him in the event of his being unable to find his way, or, having reached his destination, was unable to find his way back. He entered into minute particulars as to what bogs were to be avoided and what watercourses crossed, and which landmarks observed in the event of Justinian desiring to go in such a direction, and which in the event of his purposing to take another.

Justinian was exasperated and perplexed. He was forced to

decline well-meant offers, and to evade pointed questions. He was detained longer than he liked, as he had some miles to walk and to return, and before him, should he bring Esther with him, was a long drive in the dark through intricate lanes.

He knew his direction pretty well. Rough Tor loomed before him in the rain, wreathed in cloud. He was sufficiently versed in moor wanderings to be aware that he must keep to high ground, and he had shot snipe over the bogs in the bottoms in winter and knew where they lay, and which were dangerous.

‘Confound these country bumpkins,’ muttered the lad as he went along, ‘they are as inquisitive as women. They see so few folk, that the arrival of a visitor is to them as welcome as an orange to a child—both to be sucked dry.’

On reaching the first elevation he looked about him. Through the rain and drifting cloud he distinguished figures, but could not make out whether of cattle or men, at some distance on the moor in his rear. ‘I do not remember passing any beasts,’ he said. ‘I suppose horses—can’t keep themselves dry this weather, poor devils, going from place to place in quest of shelter, and finding none.’ Hugging his bundle of bread and sandwiches, he ran down the further side of the hill.

After a long and weariful trudge, and none is more weariful than where the feet sink at every step in oozy soil, and the knees are beaten by wet branches of heather, Justinian reached the foot of Brown Willy and began the ascent. The whole of the summit was wrapped in whirling masses of white vapour, cloud driven up from the ocean and caught there. It was like a huge mass of scoria smoking with internal fire, or would have been so had it given off the least heat. Justinian set his face determinately at the hill, and began the steep scramble among hummocks of furze and turf, through boggy patches where the moisture that condensed on the mountain had broken out and spread over its flanks, scrambled among a chaos of tumbled granite blocks like moraines of glaciers, then over short turf, slippery as glass with the wet. He was speedily enveloped in the cloud, and then could not see many feet before him. He could not, however, miss his way; he had but to climb straight before him till he reached the summit.

‘And when I get to the top—the highest point in this howling desolation—what then?’ asked Justinian. ‘Who is to see me? If I shout, who is to hear me? It will be a confounded nuisance if I have had to come all this way, and been exposed to all this

weather, in a wild goose chase. However, I have undertaken the job, and so must carry it out.'

Up among the crags, in and out among the slippery, fallen stones, stumbling, catching at bushes, panting, hot and cold at once, inhaling fog dense as smoke and smelling of the sea, Justinian toiled on. Now his parcel fell from him, and would have bounded down the mountain side but that it was happily arrested by a cluster of stones a few feet below.

'By Jove! here I am!' exclaimed Justinian. 'Here is old King Cole's mausoleum.' He referred in this flippant manner to the great cairn on the highest horn of Brown Willy.

'Now I am here—what next?'

He seated himself on the cairn. He might have been on a fragment of a ruined world, drifting in space. Above, around, below, was only dense fog sweeping along before the wind, not now condensed into rain, but thick, palpable, obscuring every object within a yard. There might have been no world below. As the vapour drove by, it was as though the cairn itself were swimming, were rushing along, and parting the milky nebulous sea, and leaving it in streamers in its wake. The granite stones of which the great pile was constructed were black with lichen, like reindeer moss, but with white antler-like moss springing up in the interstices. For a moment Justinian thought of the old king in the heart of this cairn, and how he was drawing the water of heaven into his golden cup.

'Here is a pretty go,' said Justinian. 'Up in the clouds and without a prospect of achieving what I came for.'

He had hardly muttered the words before he heard a shout; a strange call, that startled him, and made him spring to his feet and step down the side of the cairn. It was as though the buried Cornish king were calling to him from his sepulchre.

His heart beat a little faster.

'Hang it! what can that have been? Not Esther.'

Again the voice—a hoarse, strange voice; not a mere cry, but a jabber of confused words.

'It's not human; I swear this is uncomfortable,' said Justinian, with contempt for the fears that nevertheless prompted him to leave the cairn. He had not descended below the heap of granite stones before he heard the voice again, this time nearer. It issued from some masses of rock thrown together in confusion below.

He cautiously descended towards this accumulation of stones,

and became aware that there was some sort of arrangement in the blocks.

He approached, not without caution, partly because of the rapid descent of the mountain side and the slippery condition of the turf, but partly also from uncertainty as to who or what was the inmate of this cave, or whatever it might be.

'There's a sort of door—a something over it,' said the young fellow. He stooped to his knee. A door there was of two upright granite jambs, with a lintel of the same material thrown across, not more than two feet six inches above the soil. He put his hand through to draw back what seemed a mat, but let it fall again as a cry like that of a wild beast issued from the chamber into which for a moment he had looked. He was resolved now to search out the mystery, and again he thrust in his arm, held back the curtain, and looked within.

He saw a heap of heather, and on this heap, tossing, a figure. In the light that entered by the opening, he distinguished the white gleaming arms as they were flung about, a face and flashing eyes.

'I'll die game—I wi' n't speak a word—I swear it!'

'Good heavens! Esther! Esther!—is that you? Esther, I say—speak!'

At that moment, out of the mist dashed three men, and ran in upon Justinian.

'Thank you, sir. Thank you kindly for leading us to her. Now we've caught her, that's fine!'

Tregaskis spoke, and with him were two other constables.

'You fool!' said Justinian, angrily, 'do you see?—she is either mad or ill.'

(To be continued.)

THE SCILLIES AND THE SCILLONIANS.

It is perhaps unfortunate for the natives of these isles that by the exigencies of English pronunciation they are in some peril of being bracketed by the ignorant with the inmates of our lunatic asylums. But in fact the islanders might if they pleased revolt upon good grounds against the accepted appellation of their home-land. It is affirmed by experts that in the old time the name was pronounced 'Skilly.' This, though to the novel reader reminiscent of thin gruel, is at least more dignified than 'Silly.' The word is derived from the Cornish 'skoly' or 'skully,' to scatter. This is fairly significative of the hundred or two of black rocks and green islets which form the group, spread as they are over a broad surface of water. But other derivations are also in the field. There is 'sylla,' a conger eel, or 'scylly,' to separate; either of which may be at the bottom of the nomenclature of the interesting little archipelago.

Here, then, is scope for the employment of the county councillors, whose recent institution in the capital of the islands has caused so much suspicion. By getting a stout lever under established custom, the councillors may do wonders, and in a year or two effectually remove the reproach which has hitherto for long lain upon the archipelago. They will also thereby perchance justify themselves and their existence in the regard of their fellow islanders. These view them as a pretext for a new rate merely. The council chamber is over the butchers' stalls in Hugh Town market place. It is a suggestive location. Blood has been ere now spilt for more trivial grievances than this which has taken possession of the minds of the people. But let the councillors accommodate their views and actions to their situation, and all may yet be well. Let them rechristen the islands without delay. If the name must relate to their natural products, would the transition from 'Scilly' to 'Sage' be too abrupt? For in the local gardens I have seen much of that useful herb which is to roast duck what the soul of a man is to his body. The words Daffodil, Narcissus, Mackerel, New Potatoes, or Wreck may also be tendered as substitutes more or less pleasant and appropriate; and all preferable to Scilly.

In truth, however, no error could be more radical than to imagine the Scillonians deficient in wit. We know but little

about them in the olden time; except that the Romans used their isles as a repository for Cornish tin, and perhaps burrowed locally also for the same mineral. But in the last few generations the islanders have shown their abilities as smugglers, rogues, shipbuilders, pilots, and market gardeners in a way that ranges them far beyond the borders of imbecility. One half expects to find them an indolent little community, enjoying their mild climate after the manner of the people of Hawaii. But I had not been a day in St. Mary's ere I had changed my opinion in this matter, and at the end of a week methought a little of their energy might profitably be transferred to some of our mainland towns.

It is, of course, easy to reach the isles. During the early weeks of summer there is a steamer almost daily from Penzance to St. Mary's. This is more for the convenience of the fish trade, and the Billingsgate gentlemen who have it in charge, than for the visitors or the mails. Still, visitors may benefit by it—though at some personal cost. The Atlantic off the Land's End is seldom as smooth as it might be. The perfume of stale fish baskets is decidedly disagreeable. Thus it is advisable for the person who travels to the isles during the mackerel season to take a robust stomach with him; and to be heartily unconscious of bad smells. On these conditions, there is much to enjoy in the little trip of three or four hours. The Cornish coast is viewed panoramically, and for the brief interval during which one is out of sight of land it is as if one were in mid-passage between Liverpool and New York.

Very soon, however, the low rocks of the isles lift their heads above the waves, and in the evening one is set ashore, and a path between sundry fine Himalaya palms and healthy aloes brings one to a hotel in which there is as much comfort as a traveller has the right to expect.

In spite of Leland's testimony that 'there be countid 140 Islatts of Scilley,' I believe there is no exact record of the number of isles which compose the Scilly group. Scores of them are mere rock points. Their dangerous crests are visible enough at low water, when the gulls perch upon them, and give an exaggerated idea of general population to the district. But at half tide there is little to indicate them save the white eddies in the blue; and at high tide they have disappeared. Viewed from the elevated land of Tresco or St. Martin's, there is something fascinating about these inky seams upon the Atlantic; and especially on a

calm day, when the ocean is smooth and silvery. But they are eloquent of mournful memories. Hardly one of the rocks is without its association of a wreck or two.

The chief islands are St. Mary's, Tresco, St. Martin's, Agnes, and Bryher. None others are nowadays inhabited. St. Mary's, the largest, contains the capital, and the seat of local government, though Tresco is the residence of the gentleman who, as lessee under the Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall, is known locally as the Governor. All told, the population of the isles is under two thousand—with a diminishing tendency. The Governor does not favour an idle tenantry. The youths who will neither fish nor till the land nor keep shop are urged to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The Scilly damsels, unless snatched up as brides, are prone to aspire to become dressmakers in Penzance. Nothing could be better than this for the improvement of the local stock. In past days it was the fashion to intermarry to a deplorable degree. Indeed, the custom still holds, so that on Agnes you may safely address any man, woman, or child of the seven score inhabitants by the name of Hicks or Jenkins; even as, on St. Martin's, Ashford or Nance is a like pass word. But the Scillonians now see their error in this respect. Their little churchyards prove how many a youth and maiden dies ere maturity, which, in a land so notoriously salubrious, can be due only to consanguineous alliances.

St. Mary's, or Hugh Town, as the capital is indifferently called, is a clean unassuming little place of two or three streets of white houses. These broaden into a couple of squares where the shops, the banks, and sundry knots of seafaring gentlemen in blue jerseys create an aspect of commercial, or at least human activity. In May and June there is really a good deal of bustle in the place early and late. The steamer leaves in the morning, and arrives in the evening. In readiness for its departure, you may see the fishing luggers sail into the harbour by the dozen between six and nine o'clock. Their catch in the night is sold by the auctioneer on board with surprising expedition. As the boats are drawn up alongside the steamer, the spoil is displayed, and the mackerel are put up by the hundred (of six score), the bidding being confined to the Billingsgate and other agents here collected. Hake and other large fish are sold separately, or by the dozen. You hear such words as these, uttered very briskly: 'a shilling bid for these two fish—a bob, a bob, a bob,' and down goes the

hammer. The anglers may not think the price good, but at any rate they get their money on the spot. This scene continues until the anchor is up—luggers arriving to the very last minute. During the passage to Penzance the diverting processes of packing are gone through. And when the Billingsgate gentlemen have completely prepared their merchandise for the up train to town in the afternoon, they sit upon their baskets, light bad cigars, expectorate, and jest broadly with each other until the voyage is over.

Flowers and new potatoes contest with the mackerel the privilege of the deck room of these steamers. It is far from purgatorial to be wedged on board between a couple of cases of the Scilly white, an indigenous narcissus. They are much sweeter than the fish. You may see the cultivators row into the harbour with their cargoes from the other isles. One farmer of St. Martin's with whom I stayed sent as many as twelve thousand flowers in a day. At threepence a dozen (the wholesale price), this clearly means money. Of arum lilies also he was a considerable exporter. But their price is much more variable, veering between sixpence apiece during Holy Week and a shilling a dozen afterwards. For my part, I was much interested in what I saw of the flower culture in the isles. It is an ideal profession for the 'decayed gentlewomen' who advertise in the newspapers for something to do: clean, and sweet, and profitable. The Scillonians believe with good reason that the trade has not yet reached its farthest point of development. Each year sees another acre or two set out with narcissus bulbs. During the spring of 1891, a hundred and eighty tons of flowers left Scilly for England—excluding the post parcels. This does not look as if the south of France was, as some thought, about to push Scilly out of Covent Garden. The few hours' clear gain that the Scilly flowers have over the baskets from the Riviera are very precious in the esteem of florists.

It must not be supposed that vegetation is here anything like as profuse as in Madeira. In my ignorance I fancied it might be. I looked to see thickets of bougainvillea and heliotrope, and flowering geraniums as high as a house. But the isles are too small and exposed for this sort of thing. None of them are two miles across. The Atlantic storms are as bad in the Scillies as anywhere. If it were not for the well-established hedges of the Scilly elm and the *macrantha*, the salt spray and the gales would

soon destroy the best gardens of St. Mary's. Those of Tresco are more sheltered ; the island of St. Mary's here acting as a screen in that terrible quarter, the south-west. Save on Tresco, it may almost be said that there are no trees in the archipelago, though the apple orchards in the middle of St. Mary's may seem to belie me. The islands consist mainly of low downs, covered with gorse and heather. You may scent the gorse miles away from the land, and the gold of it on the green hills is one of the prettiest features of Scilly. These downs end at the coast in granite rocks, though of no great size, with edges and cliffs perfectly appalling to vessels.

Even under the guard of three lighthouses and a lightship, the Scillies remain, and are likely to remain, a terror to mariners. Thousands of lives have been lost upon them. I almost gave up the affection I had generated for them when I saw the prodigious litter of ship's skeletons and heavy iron wreckage wedged among the great boulders of granite on their shores. It is the same with them all ; though Agnes is the worst. Its south-westerly position makes it serve as a sort of snare for derelicts and corpses. On this island is the oldest of the Scilly lighthouses, a veteran of two centuries' standing. Among the many disasters of which it has been a witness, the wreck of Sir Cloudesley Shovell's fleet in 1707, and of the 'Schiller' in 1875, were probably the worst. But there is no end to the tale of the lesser calamities of these waters. No wonder the head keeper of this lighthouse is a somewhat melancholy man, seeing that he is of a reflective turn of mind. His landscape of rocks is about as enlivening to him as a square mile or two of tombstones.

The visitor who stays in the islands for more than ten days or a fortnight will hardly fail to see some rough weather. In my case, I brought it with me from Penzance. We had a lively passage, and a night of storm and fog in combination ensued. When I woke in the morning, it was to behold a procession of Cornish and Scilly luggers driving fast by my window into the haven of St. Mary's. They had seen the storm warning hoisted on the hill just behind the hotel, though, if they had not seen it, the wind, the sky, and the waves would have sufficiently admonished them. For the next two days they stayed in port, lounging heavily between the more sheltered corners of the streets, the public-houses, and the meteorological station, where the barometer was descending with a steady curve. And all this time the gusts

were continuous, and the sea thundered on the southern side of the island with a fury that was nothing less than frantic. The granite coast from Peninis Head to Pellistry Bay was like a fringe of fountains, so high did the spray rise in recoil from the rocks.

Confessedly, after two or three days of such weather one begins to tire of the sublime in nature. The wailing of the wind everywhere—in the streets, on the downs, and through the window-sash of one's bedroom—begins to depress the mind. Tales get into circulation about what has happened on the outlying islands. A body has been washed up somewhere, and certain fresh-looking pieces of wreckage. There is no fish at dinner-time. The groups of dissatisfied seamen in blue jerseys and jackboots fall out of humour with the weather, and gather round the window behind which the scoring-needle of the barometer marks persistently downhill. Some of them, in default of other employment, venture to get drunk in public—a sad scandal in so well-behaved a little place. It is annoying to be drenched every time one goes out for an hour or so; and the strenuous buffetings of the wind, agreeably exciting at first, affect one later as a series of impertinences of a somewhat exhausting kind. In short, a general spirit of discontent seems to settle upon the land when the bad weather has lasted forty or fifty hours. There are no new-comers at the hotels—small wonder at that, for the passage under such conditions, if possible at all, is apt to be sensational; and the boatmen, who depend largely for a livelihood upon their hired trips to Tresco, may as well twirl their brawny thumbs in the front parlour as think of business engagements at such a time. Only the gulls seem to enjoy it. Their unrestrained screaming, as they drive before the wind, among the masts of the luggers tossing at anchor, is, however, an additional irritant to the disturbed minds of the bipeds beneath them.

It is under such influences as these that one sinks into full sympathy with the more atrabilious effusions in the visitors' book. There is a solid proportion of them, which seems to prove that the Scilly air does not suit all sorts and conditions of people. Here is a stanza of an irregular kind which is a type of the rest:—

O fog-enwreathed Scilly!

Without regret I quit

Thy bare and rugged isles,

Recalling saddest scenes of woe and sudden death,

Telling of broken hearts and blighted happiness!

Perhaps the author did not get meals or a bed to his mind, or his liver was lethargic. A good dinner, a sound night's sleep, or a long walk on the downs might have changed his humour altogether. But, on the other hand, it is easy to see that a week of storms, a surfeit on the local literature or category of wrecks, and a bodily indisposition would suffice to affect the judgment of the most reasonable-minded man.

I shall not soon forget the May Day I spent in St. Mary's. At the hotel I was given to understand that great sights were in preparation. A May-queen was chosen. Of flowers for the adornment of her majesty and her majesty's attendants there was, of course, no lack. There was a May-pole in the larger square; the hotel flag was run up to the top of the flagstaff; and I was informed that from time immemorial it was the custom to eat junket and cream on this merry anniversary.

But, as ill-luck would have it, this was the second day of tempestuous weather. No sooner had the little maidens assembled for their first chant in the lesser square of the town than the clouds broke upon them. They were a charming sight in their mock bridal finery, girded and bowered with lilies and daffodils and the finest narcissi. But the weather was unconscionably rude. The wind tore the wreathing from the May-pole, and whistled on all sides so loudly that it drowned the infant voices. Ere half the processioning was over the mothers began to interfere with the ceremonial. It was not unnatural. An anniversary of the most inspiring kind is trivial compared to the diseases one may contract by undue exposure. And so the festival faded away, and the storm was left in charge of the town. The fisher lads, in their blouses and jack-boots, were also crowned with narcissi. Their weather-beaten bronzed faces looked well in such vicinity. But even they were not thoroughly tempest-proof, and ere long the streets were void of wayfarers, and a litter of flowers with broken stalks and bruised heads was eloquent of the May-day ruin which had followed the May-day hopes.

I was told that the modern May-queens of Scilly are nothing like as pretty as the May-queens of ten and twenty years ago. This, like other defects of the age, is supposed to be due to the march of civilisation. The more comely damsels think they may do better for themselves by emigrating to the mainland, and, when they marry, their children are not of course available for local May-day festivals. But I am disinclined to accept this slur

upon the existing matrons of the archipelago. It was proffered me by an unwedded lady in the midsummer-time of her life. She was, I judge, prejudiced against the younger generation.

With the barometer falling steadily by tenths of an inch, it did not look as if I could gain my wish of a passage to Tresco the next morning. In effect the storm was at its worst during the whole of the ensuing day. The fourth morning, however, dawned fair, in utter calm. I at once prepared to depart; but when I found that my boatman had been requisitioned to carry a coffin for the interment of a waif of the sea, 'three weeks in the water,' which had landed on Agnes at daybreak, I was delayed yet again. I might, of course, have sat on or in the coffin at my ease; but landsmen have their superstitions as well as sailors, and so I excused myself.

This brings me to one of the stock grievances of the islanders. In the old times they, like the Warden of the Cinque Ports, had a very considerable interest in the wrecks and derelicts which came upon their coasts. We read how, in A.D. 1300, the then Earl of Cornwall made a grant of the whole of St. Agnes (an island 312 acres in extent) with all its rents, customs, and wrecks cast ashore. A wreck was, in fact, a godsend, like the manna in the desert. It has been said, in reproach of the islanders of Agnes, that they were wont to pray for wrecks, entreating for the purpose their patron saint—Warna by name—who was reputed to have reached them from Ireland one day, and conferred a sort of sanctity upon them. Was there so much positive wickedness in this petitioning? Surely not. If a ship was so unfortunate as to be reft of its crew, and lie at the mercy of the winds, was it not better that it should drive upon some land where its contents would be welcome to the inhabitants than that it should sink to the bottom of the Atlantic and profit nobody? On those grounds the ancient Hickses and Jenkinsees of Agnes seem to be justified in the prayers which some of us regard as so inexcusably ghoulis.

Nowadays things are different. When a vessel goes to pieces off any of the isles, the revenue officers are quickly alive to what may happen. Merchandise is annexed. If the owners of the vessel are unknown, such property goes to the Crown. But, on the other hand, let a score or two of corpses float ashore, and what happens? The law compels the islanders to bury the bodies at their own expense. There is not even a fund for the purpose,

Coffins and inquests and boatmen's labour from St. Mary's together make up a stout little bill, which has to be met.

This is a sore subject in the islands, and well it may be. The Scillonians are ready enough to risk their lives in the cause of shipwrecked humanity. They do it gladly, for the fisher-folk among them know that they too may some day be in the like need of aid. But it is too bad that the Crown, which absorbs such unclaimed increment as the Atlantic proffers to the isles, should not defray the cost of the burial of the bodies (often in the worst of condition) which also come from the Atlantic.

A typical case of this hardship happened a few years ago, consequent upon the loss of a cattle vessel. A herd of dead bullocks drifted on to the islands. They had to be provided with graves, and the cost of their removal and obsequies was 130*l*. Of this the Governor paid 50*l*. The rest was raised by a local rate.

In the interests of humanity, if not in common fairness, a better system ought to be established. During my visits to the untenanted islets I remarked that my boatman religiously tramped round each rocky coast. His exercise resulted in sundry lengths of bamboo, slabs of cork, and the like. I asked him what he would have done if he had espied a corpse. He puckered his lip. Of course he would have done his duty. He would have drawn it above high-water mark, if it was not already there; and on his return to the capital he would have informed the authorities. But there was no doubting he would have done it more gladly, and perhaps been more eager to rescue the poor battered relic, if some reward was attached to the service.

The Crown might well do something in this matter.

I am afraid my paper is a good deal more sombre in tone than I designed to make it. But really, if there be any fault in the affair, it must lie at the foot of the islands themselves. Wherever I went, these witnesses of ruin were there also. The island churchyards abound in tombstones upon which the words 'Lost at sea' are chiselled. On the coasts of the various islands I was constantly stumbling over iron rods or massive timbers torn from shattered ships, or clogging my feet in the briny clothes of some hapless mortal who in all probability lay peacefully in the bed of the Atlantic. The church bells were once ship's bells. The fencing over which I climbed to pass from one field or meadow to another was of ship's planks or beams set roughly side by side, with perhaps an iron balustrading that was once the

bulwark of a merchantman. The outhouses of the farmsteads are built of wreckage, and the door of the cowshed was formerly the door of some captain's cabin. How, under such conditions, is it possible to forget that one is in a land over which it may be said that the sweep of Death's broad-bladed scythe is for ever extending?

Worst of all, however, to me were the sights in the gardens to which I went with enthusiasm to inhale the perfume of the Scilly white and admire the healthy verdure of the young potato plants. Here, at any rate, it seemed to me that I should be in a sweet invigorating atmosphere. But I was mistaken. The figure-heads of dead ships met me at the end of the leafy avenues between the various flower-beds. You can easily imagine them: a Jack-tar, large as life, with one cheek knocked away; the 'Mary Jane,' 'Friar Tuck,' 'The Admiral,' 'The Spanish Girl,' 'The Dolphin,' and so on. At the famous Tresco Gardens there is an entire shed of them among the tree-ferns and palms. To me it was dreadful: better than being in a charnel-house, yet not much better. Each wooden shape was an epitome of the woe that had befallen the vessel of which it had been a part, and of the men and women whom it had carried to their doom.

Were I Lord of the Isles, I would bury these many figure-heads out of sight. They may not be pestilential, like derelict bullocks, but in every other respect they have as much right to be underground.

And now of the fairer side of life in the Scillies. It exists, though one might almost profess doubt of it. Some say it lies in the very temperate climate of the isles, the mean in winter seldom going below 45°, and in summer seldom rising above 58°. Snow is a rarity. This year, however (1891), there was enough of it to make the oldest inhabitant think the world was coming to an end. The children, less experienced, thought the sky was raining sugar-plums.

They live long in the Scillies if they survive the first thirty years of life. Hale octogenarians are numerous for a community less than two thousand in number. A certain Tresco man of eighty-seven or eight (he couldn't remember which) was my boatman one day to St. Martin's, an island two miles away. He rowed me thither, and while I was there he took himself off for a few hours into the open Atlantic and caught half a score of fine pollock, after which he returned to convey me back to Tresco. I

let him do all this because I wished to see if he was as capable as he was reputed to be. They told me he was full of knowledge about the islands; but he was so cautious and reticent that I am constrained to believe he has not always 'acted on the square.' Indeed, he let out that he had borne many a barrel upon his back in the old days, by which he meant smuggled rum and brandy. He also told with pride how, some forty years ago, when a merchantman drove upon an island north of Tresco, he was the second man aboard her in the morning. I saw much of this old fellow, but he was never more interesting than when I met him for the first time prowling among the granite blocks of the north coast of Tresco, with bent back, his white beard shaking to and fro, and a coil of rope round his meagre waist. I asked him what he was doing. He glanced at me shrewdly with his beady eye, and replied, in a shrill pipy voice, 'I be just looking to see if I can pick up some bits of things; but it be a bad time; there be nothing here.' 'Ah, Agnes!' he exclaimed, when I mentioned my visit to that fatal island, 'there's plenty there. There be many a ship goes to pieces off Crebewethan and them, and washes up there.' He was glad on this occasion to get rid of me, and I left him peering like a gull this way and that as he groped along.

Yet, though undoubtedly salubrious, there is a good deal of fog over the islands at times. This would not suit all invalids, quite apart from the effect the warning-guns in the night from the Bishop Lighthouse might have upon people of a nervous temperament. In the little churchyard of the island of Bryher (area 268 acres; population about 100) there is a tombstone to one Jacob Hicks, who died in 1852, aged ninety-six. He was probably the patriarch of the isles, a position which, from part of his epitaph, he seems to have valued:—

This is to let you see

I've had the fifth generation on my knee.

The absence of the usual kinds of social amusement may also be regarded as a deterrent for people in ill health, to whom diversion is one of the best of tonics. A Methodist cantata, now and then, appears to be the most advanced form of dissipation in the capital. To be sure, there is a local book-club; but as the subscribers are still busy with Scott's novels, it will be long ere the writers of our time come into their hands. I was asked what I thought of Waverley much as in town one is asked one's opinion of the latest of Ibsen's trifles.

However, I need say no more on this count. There is no resident invalid population here as in Penzance or Torquay. A single doctor looks after the entire archipelago, upon a tariff of five shillings per visit in the day-time, and ten shillings by night. As in other island groups, the islanders on such occasions take their turns in manning the boat which is to convey the doctor to his patient. The poor gentleman sometimes earns his fee at considerable self-sacrifice.

To my mind the charm of the islands is the simple primitive life of the islanders. To appreciate this, it is of course needful to abandon the hotels of St. Mary's, with their charges of eighteen-pence daily for attendance. The other islands do not breed hotels, though there is a house in Tresco where visitors can lunch, and a licensed house also in Bryher. On Agnes or St. Martin's you are at the mercy of the hospitality of the people; and it is the same in the eastern part of St. Mary's.

I spent three days in the little white house of a retired mariner on the east coast of Tresco, and quite fell in love with the serenity of the life. It was a house built shipwise. To enter it one had to stoop as if one were going down a hatchway; to ascend to the bedroom it was further necessary to take heed of one's head. Here I lived on plain food and kept early hours. The walls were populous with grocers' and drapers' Christmas almanacs. A funeral card or two kept me in mind of my mortality. The crockery and cutlery were of an unassuming kind. I drank out of a Jubilee mug, with the words 'A present for a good little girl' upon it. The cooking was far below club standard.

But what of all this? There was nothing really of the nature of a hardship about it, and as a change it was delightful. The ex-mariner's boat was moored just outside, under the cottage wall, which at high tide the Atlantic half hid. It was easy enough to get into it and row to Norwethel, Tean, St. Helen's, or the serrated shape of Menawore, in search of adventures. The adventures were of course likely to be of the moderate order; but I was content enough when I found myself chased by the thirteen young bullocks of Tean (unused to the sight of mortals) with singular unanimity and in a lusty manner that reminded me of a Spanish bull ring. On St. Helen's there is what some take for the ruins of a church, and also the dismantled building which years back was used as a pesthouse. The bedsteads upon which the sick sailors lay still stand disjointedly in the roofless rooms.

On calm days at low tide the space between Tresco and St. Martin's presented an odd appearance. Its two miles of water-way shrank to three or four poor little channels between the black island rocks, and here, too, care was essential to avoid sticking upon one of the protrusive weed-clad granite edges which peeped above the blue water. The white sand underneath coloured the shallow currents pale green. The perfume and gold of the gorse upon all the islands in sight added to the charm of the scene.

There was further an old seventeenth-century block-house on a headland within gunshot of the cottage window, and soft turf with scentless violets in it on the slope from the block-house to the sea. The Tresco church was about as near in another direction—a bijou place of worship, with Himalaya palms and palmetto dispersed among the graves. From the low wind-blown patch of firs a little more remote, the cuckoo sounded its soothing note from still grey morn to dewy eve. And by climbing the hill in the middle of the island, I could in a little while reach the Smith monument, set in the heart of a gorse thicket, with rabbits speeding hither and thither, and the finest panorama of the islands north, south, east, and west. This was the place for the sunset. Even though the wind might be ever so fierce, the granite base of the pile (in memory of the late Governor) afforded stout protection from it; and with one's back to the thing, one might watch the changing hues of the sky until the gloaming had arrived, and the lonely rock of the Bishop Lighthouse, four miles from inhabited land, had disappeared into the distance.

It was a cottage, too, for lazy moods, as well as for a certain amount of romance. For there was a well-made bench in the sandy garden, with some gillyflowers and young onions growing in front of it; and the ex-mariner had a famous telescope through which one could see the men of the Round Island Lighthouse (the third in the archipelago) moving about their limited rocky domain. Like other ex-mariners, this good fellow could tell yarns beginning—'When we were off Cape Hatteras, one day in the year so and so.' But he was never so utterly tiresome or mendacious as some of his brethren are apt to be on the like themes.

In this little cottage I was treated with as much distinction as possible for four-and-sixpence a day.

It was nearly the same on the island of St. Martin. Here I was the guest of a farmer in the Middle Town; and it was settled (not without apology from the farmer's wife about the extravagance

of the charge) that I should pay four shillings daily for my board and lodging. The chief article in the bill of fare was clotted cream. At low tide my host collected cockles from the sandy shore looking towards St. Mary's, three miles distant. These, with excellent plum-cake and a tin of Australian meat, may be described as the table dainties of St. Martin's. My bedroom window opened into the greenhouse, in which heliotrope and hundreds of cut narcissi ready for the market made a perfume that was almost too sweet for sufferance. There was no end to the amiability of the household. One day the farmer had the butcher over from St. Mary's, and a two-year-old ox was slain in the presence of the people. That evening, when I went to bed, the gory head of the slaughtered beast hung at the foot of my staircase, to remind me of a nursery picture of the decapitation of Goliath. And on the following day part of the 'offal' enriched the principal meal.

But it was more especially outside the farmhouse and its narcissus beds that I took my pleasure on St. Martin's. The island is only about five hundred acres in extent, but it is an enchanting combination of rocky coast, white sandy bays, and grassy downs with gorse and heather and crimson stonecrop on them. The hills pervade it; and from the balmy ridge Cornwall seems quite near. Fortunately the weather was exquisite while I was here. At low tide I walked to White Island, and inspected the deep fissure which some think a relic of ancient tin-prospecting Romans. There is no present trace of tin in the cutting; but if man's handiwork is not in the quarry, Nature is a subtler imitatrix of it than one would expect to find her. This island, like most of the others, is destined in no long time to be divided into two parts. The Atlantic pinches the waists of the isles until, after a series of spring tides, channels form in their midst. Thus the archipelago has no doubt been made, and thus the number of its parts is ever on the increase.

I think the view of the islands from the St. Martin's downs is even more interesting than that from Tresco. Here we are not in the middle of the group. It is all spread out beneath us upon one side; while upon the other side is the Atlantic and the grey outline of the Cornish coast beyond. Seen by moonlight, the interlacing of the reefs in the silvery water is a remarkable sight. At such a time, too, there will be the witness of half a dozen lighthouses to suggest that not always are the Scillies so sweet

and idyllic a picture. For not only are the local lights visible from these downs of St. Martin, but those of Cornwall also.

St. Martin's ought to be a moral little land. Its inhabitants neither smoke tobacco nor drink strong drink. There is no licensed house in its three miles of length. In case of need, a certain householder will provide a little brandy; but one may conjecture that the need will have to be extreme before it is administered. The perfume of my cigar seemed to certain members of my household a very strange kind of smell. I am sorry to say it by no means met with approval from the pretty young daughter of the farmer. She it was who picked the narcissi for the British market, and deftly tied them in bunches of twelve. Her mother and father rated her for her daintiness, but she was not to be led against her own instincts. In other ways I was not to her liking. When first I entered the house as a guest, she made me happy by her readiness to wait upon me and by the winsome blushes upon her cheeks. Somehow it was assumed I was a woollen draper, or at least a grocer. But when, in response to leading questions put to me at meal-time, I avowed that I lived by my pen, and even wrote stories, all the attractive lustre faded from her eyes, and a leaden look of reproach took its place. 'Stories!' she exclaimed, 'how can a man write such things—all lies!' There was not a doubt that I had degraded myself in her esteem. And I resolved there and then that when I return to St. Martin's, it shall be with a portmanteau half full of pattern-books. But I fear, long ere that time comes, one of the young men of St. Martin's will have taken her to a certain little white house, with its appanage of narcissus beds and new-potato patches.

NEEDLE-CRAFT.

A SMALL matter—the invention of marking-ink—elbowed out of fashion the sampler, which, up to the date of our adoption of that indelible fluid as a means of marking our linen, was in general use for the furtherance of the education of girls. Our mothers and grandmothers, and theirs, and those who stood in the same relation to them, all worked samplers in their school-days as certainly as they filled copybooks with writing exercises and slates with simple sums. Taste, ingenuity, precision, patience, and industry were all cultivated in the performance of this work of homely art, as surely as these advantages and virtues are developed by instruction in the various crafts approved by the advocates of the Sloyd system as a means of all-round culture. Besides the rows of letters and figures worked on them in fine crossed stitches, there were fanciful borders wrought round them, and differentiated ornamental lines inserted between them; then there were pyramidal trees in pots worked in the corners, and dogs and birds of wonderful presentment insinuated promiscuously; and, added to these, there were, in some examples, verses of hymns and mottoes of admonitory purport, such as ‘Fear God and Honour the King,’ worked in finer stitches above the name and age of the worker. They are still to be seen, in black frames, in many pleasant, peaceful old-fashioned homes—no longer, perhaps, in the parlours where they were first placed proudly, but in some less prominent position—and they must always be interesting as links in the long chain of ornamental needle-craft with which feminine industry has enriched our houses from remote times. They must not be confused with the less appealing work of a later date called Berlin woolwork, which differed from them completely, especially in the treatment of the backgrounds of the groups of gaudy flowers and high-toned figures of which it was composed, which groundwork was worked all over to be of one uniform tint, whereas the sampler left the soft white canvas background bare.

Of much more considerable account, however, are the great pieces of tapestry preserved in the various country seats of our nobility and gentry. Not a few of the touches that give so much

enchantment to Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, for instance, are imparted by the solemn 'hangings,' the superb pieces of tapestry that were there when the bewitching Dorothy Vernon lived in it, and its grey courts and green terraces were enlivened with the passing to and fro of much goodly company and many retainers. Hardwick Hall, too, in the same county, owes much of its Elizabethan air to the needlework of the Countess of Shrewsbury, and a great deal of its romance to that of Mary Queen of Scots, who languished there for a time as a prisoner. The lightness of this fabric, owing to the fact that there is 'more glass than wall' in it, its palatial extent, the trimness, the general old-world aspect, impart impressions of their own; but without the needlework, the arras on the walls, the hangings and counterpanes on the state beds, and the cushions and other adornments of the chairs, we could not realise so completely the features of Elizabethan home-life. We know that a correspondent of Sir William Cecil reported to him that Mary Queen of Scots mentioned that 'all day she wrought with her nydill, and that diversity of the colours made the work less tedious, and she contynued so long at it till very payne made her to give over.' And we feel that even Holyrood Palace would not be quite so weird, so haunted-looking, and so full of fancies, without its faded tapestry and timeworn bed-hangings. The subtle and indescribable charm of Wolsey's great palace at Hampton Court also owes much to its tapestry. In fact, whenever we come into the presence of ancient needlework on a grand scale, those who have eyes to see are brought under an impressive influence that is difficult to put into words.

Of all the ancient needlework that time and chance have left us, the piece representing the invasion of England by William the Conqueror, the defeat of Harold at Senlac, and the retreat of the Saxons, must be considered of the most curious and valuable interest. This work has been time out of mind ascribed to the needle of Matilda, wife of the Conqueror. Two other Matildas—the wife and the daughter of Henry I.—have also been accredited with it by antiquaries who were unable to reconcile the claim made in favour of the Conqueror's wife with certain facts connected with it. The latest opinion of the best informed on the subject, however, is that it was made to the order of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, brother of the Conqueror, as a decoration or enrichment for a particular place corresponding with its dimensions in the cathedral of Bayeux, in which edifice it has always been kept—as

we may see by mention of it in inventories—till it was removed to the town library in the same city. It consists of a roll of linen 19 inches wide and about 211 feet long, on which are outlined, in coloured wool or crewel, an immense number of small figures representing the occurrence of various incidents preceding and attending the conquest of this country by William of Normandy, with many short inscriptions elucidating them. Little peculiarities in the language of these inscriptions, taken into consideration with the costumes and with a certain custom that was in vogue at the time of shaving the backs of men's heads, minutely delineated, have helped modern authorities to the certainty that the work is contemporaneous with the events depicted in it.

Looking into it very closely, too, it has been noted that the figure most frequently represented, with the exception of the royal personages, is that of Odo, and that the few officers in it that are mentioned by name are those who are known to have been in his service and to have held large estates under him in Kent and other counties; and, coupling these facts with the certainty that the bishop only would have the power of allowing a profane subject to be introduced into a sacred building as a decoration, it is concluded by both French and English authorities that, whether it was the work of his royal sister-in-law or not, it was placed in the cathedral by his leave or order. The work begins with a representation of King Edward the Confessor seated upon his throne and conversing with two persons. One of these is supposed to be Harold, who, further on, is shown with a hawk on his wrist riding to Bosham, which was then a royal seaport. We are next shown a church and two persons entering it, and several figures drinking in an upper chamber of a house adjoining it, whence preparations are made by other figures—one of which is descending stairs with an oar in his hand—to reach a boat. Two ships full of warriors and mariners are then depicted, in connection with which an inscription informs us that Harold crossed the sea and went full sail into the territory of the Count de Ponthieu. In conformity with the mediæval usage of detaining strangers till ransomed, Harold is arrested by the Count, and is shown as being conducted to a château at Belrem. There is a dwarf shown holding horses, whose name is given as Tuold. Then another interview is delineated, and the next inscription mentions that the Count conducted Harold to William in person. The roll proceeds to portray a grand expedition, in which Harold assists William against Conan,

Duke of Brittany, and an inscription records, 'Here William gave arms to Harold.' Various details follow, with some of which we are all familiar, such as Harold's oath to William, his return to England and interview with Edward the Confessor, the death-bed and funeral of that monarch, the crowning of Harold by Archbishop Stigand, the appearance of a comet; and then Harold is shown on the throne listening to a messenger who appears to have brought momentous tidings. The inscriptions explain that the scene is removed again to Normandy: 'Here an English ship came into the dominions of Duke William;' and we are shown men hewing down trees, building ships, dragging them down to the beach and lading them with arms and provisions, under the heading, 'Here Duke William commanded ships to be built.' Seventeen or eighteen ships are depicted as arriving at Pevensey, followed by the landing of horses and foraging for provisions. A warrior on horseback is named as 'Here is Wadard'—now identified as one of Bishop Odo's officers. Cooks are shown as dressing meat preparatory to a banquet, at which, we may see, the Normans made use of their shields for tables, and Bishop Odo said grace whilst an attendant knelt near him.

Another inscription records that William ordered a fort to be built at Hastings; and then we see a house on fire, from which a woman and boy are escaping, which is probably one of the incidents of the crisis that was well known. Duke William is now to be made out at the head of his knights armed with a club, with two banners borne behind him; and, again, interrogating Vidal as to the resources of the army of Harold; and, immediately afterwards, we may see Harold receiving similar information concerning William's army. The invader is next depicted haranguing his followers; and then the grand onslaught is portrayed. 'Here fell together English and French in battle,' records an inscription, after the death of Harold's brothers Lewin and Gurth. Bishop Odo, clad in armour, on horseback, is shown encouraging the invading forces; and, beneath the words, 'Here is Duke William,' the Conqueror is portrayed in the act of raising his helmet, as if to prove his identity to his followers. The great encounter is followed by the death of Harold, before which he is shown as fighting valiantly by the side of his standard-bearer, and then endeavouring to draw out the arrow that has pierced his eye. He is represented as falling to the ground, and a Norman knight wounding him in the thigh. Lastly, the English are depicted in headlong flight, and

the tapestry comes to an end, torn and ragged and illegible. Wace's 'Roman du Rou' does not give us a more vivid presentation of this great historical event, nor are the accounts handed down by historians more full or more precise.

Domesday Book makes mention of a certain Aluuid who held two hides of land in Buckinghamshire free to bequeath or sell, and half a hide that was only granted to her by Earl Godric for the time he should be earl, on condition that she taught his daughter to work embroidery; and there is record in the same survey of another embroideress, Leuide by name, who made embroidery for the king and queen. From this time wills, inventories, and accounts make frequent mention of embroiderers and the 'Crafte of Brauderie.' The wife of Alderet of Winchester worked a chasuble of sufficient worth to be left by will, by Queen Matilda, to the Abbey of the Trinity at Caen. Isabella, queen of Edward II., paid Rose, wife of John de Bureford, a hundred marks for a cope. But we read of men as practising the craft as well as women. Adam de Basinges was paid 24*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* for a cope of red silk presented to the Bishop of Hereford by Henry III., and further sums for two embroidered chasubles for the royal chapel, and tunics and dalmatics. Thomas Cheiner was paid 140*l.* for a vest of velvet embroidered with divers work, purchased by Edward III. for his own chaplain. Richard II. and his queen appointed Stephen Vyne their chief embroiderer, and Henry IV. subsequently granted him a pension in recognition of his skill. In the Issue Roll for the year 1366 there is an entry of a payment made to William Courtenay for a dalmatic wrought with pelicans, images, and tabernacles of gold for Edward III. The Close Rolls of a previous period, 1252, record that John de Sumercote and Roger the tailor were commanded to get made four robes of the best brocade, of which two were for the king and two for the queen, in anticipation of the marriage of the Princess Margaret. One of the queen's tailor-made costumes was ordered to be of a violet colour, embroidered with three small leopards in front and three behind. We can only conclude, therefore, that both sexes pursued this elegant trade; and it may be that the men attended to what we may term the tailoring and the goldsmith's work, and the embroideresses executed the delicate needlework.

As well as being lavishly applied to wearing apparel for royal personages, ecclesiastics, and other persons wealthy enough to procure it, embroidery was largely used in churches for the altar-

cloths, frontals, enrichment of bier-cloths, and hangings. The Bayeux tapestry was evidently used as a frieze-like decoration; and most of the religious houses possessed collections of needlework of various kinds. Lincoln Cathedral, for example, is said to have owned upwards of six hundred vestments richly wrought with jewellery and gold; and York, Durham, London, and Peterborough also possessed many specimens. Pieces of rich needlework were often given to these establishments as 'offerings,' and many more were left to them by will. Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham, left some very costly examples to his cathedral, for instance, and Hugh Pudsey, King Stephen's nephew, did the same. At Wardour Castle two altar fronts of velvet have been preserved; several other private collections have many more, and a few of our country churches can boast of altar-cloths and pulpit-cloths of ancient needlework.

Another large field for the display of embroidery consisted of banners. King John ordered Reginald de Cornhill to furnish him with five banners with his arms embroidered on them, in 1215; and the French poet who has left us a description of the Siege of Carlarverock mentions particularly that the banners and caparisons of the knights and soldiers were embroidered on silk and satin with their arms. Perhaps the most interesting example of a military kind we have left us is the jupon worn by the Black Prince, and hung up over his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, with his gauntlets, helm, sword, and shield. Those who have been permitted to examine it minutely describe it as made of velvet, that was once crimson, on a foundation of fine buckram or calico. Between these two materials there is a padding of cotton, and the whole is stitched and quilted together longitudinally, or gamboised. On the velvet are the arms of the Prince, embroidered in gold, which have been worked on linen and then attached to it. It has been pointed out that the effigy on the tomb is clad in a garment that is precisely like it in every particular, even to a half fleur-de-lys that occurs on it.

We know also that it was used for domestic enrichments in various forms. In the inventory of the effects of Henry V. there is set down a 'bed of embroidered figs.' The fashion for these rich bed-hangings continued down to Stuart times, as Evelyn states that the embroidery of James II.'s bed at Whitehall cost 3,000*l*. There seems, however, to have been an exceptional wave of extravagance in the matter of needlework in

the reign of Edward III., as that monarch enacted that no one whose income was below four hundred marks per annum should wear cloth of gold or enamelled or embroidered drapery. The prohibition does not appear to have had the effect intended, for in the reign of Henry IV. the matter was brought before Parliament by a complaint that divers persons practising the craft used 'unsuffisaunt stuff,' unduly wrought, and privately sent their work to fairs in different parts of the country, to the great deceit of the sovereign lord the king and all his people. Whereupon an order was made that such counterfeit articles should be seized and forfeited to the king.

We read of *baudekyn*, *samit*, *tarterain*, and cloth of gold as materials that were embroidered, as well as linen, velvet and silk. The design of the needlework worked on these substances appears to have been first cut out of linen to the desired shape, and all the edges of this foundation bound or made good, and then these patterns were covered with stitches, and finally sewn on to the groundwork, and scroll-work or tendrils added to them. Spangles and pearls were both used as embellishments. John de Colonia made a white robe worked with pearls for Queen Philippa. Heraldic devices, such as leopards, white harts, lions, griffins, peacocks, dragons, falcons, swans, hearts, moons, stars, flowers, and leaves were of ordinary occurrence. More elaborate efforts consisted of seraphs and various sacred figures and representations of sacred events. A different process was used for tapestry when made by the hand, in which the canvas was completely covered with woolwork, which generally represented in pictorial fashion life-sized figures engaged in various ways. Miss Linwood's exhibition of her own needle-wrought tapestry, in Leicester Square, about fifty years ago, afforded an opportunity for an examination of the mode of proceeding. Before the needle could begin to ply, an artist was required to design the pictures to be wrought, just as imperatively as in the case of the more numerous pieces manufactured with the aid of mechanical processes, and although not always a Raphael or a Mantegna, he must have been a person of considerable culture. All that was required of the needle was to reproduce his work as faithfully as it could.

When our attention is turned to ancient needlework we can but be interested in its continuity, and struck with the amount of it that has been executed, and with the frequent mention of it, incidentally or otherwise, in old writings. The writer of the Book of

Exodus makes mention of embroidery three times, that of the Book of Ezekiel half a dozen times. Homer dwelt with minuteness on a garment with gold embroidery representing the chase of a fawn that Penelope gave Ulysses. The monkish historian, Reginald of Durham, in describing the aversion St. Cuthbert felt to women, related that an embroideress, 'nobly skilled,' determined to pass the limits he had assigned to them, but was detected intuitively and ignominiously expelled from the church. Froissart gives an account of a dispute that arose between two knights who had the same devices embroidered upon their surcoats, to which each of them thought he was exclusively entitled. Chaucer makes frequent mention of it, as when he says of the young squire among the Canterbury pilgrims, 'embrowdid was he, as it were a mede, Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede;' and of the carpenter's fair wife, that 'whit was hir smok and browdid al byfore and eek byhynde.'

But more impressive than such allusions are the items that are left to us with all their fragrance of old times, all the pathos of old memories, and the distinct characteristics of successive centuries, whether they are the rich robes of ecclesiastics, as in Durham library; the pennons and pennoncelles of brave knights who fought at Flodden, as at Edinburgh; or the dainty faded work that decorates the bower of a dame of good repute, as at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire; or the flowered white satin pocket-book worked for Dr. Johnson, now in Lichfield Museum; or the work of more recent days, such as the chair-seats marked 'D. W.' in Wordsworth's cottage. Each example, according to its kind, is reminiscent and suggestive in a high degree.

CHARACTER NOTE.

THE SCHOLAR.

'Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il le croit.'

HE is forty-five years old. He is erudite, classic, and scholarly. He knows everything. What can be duller than a man who knows everything? He is scientific and botanical. He wears grey thread gloves—a size too large—goloshes and a comforter. And yet when his college presents him with a living—a remote living in the wilds of an eastern county—he purposes to be married.

This Fossil, with traces of an ice age clearly left on his formal manners and punctilious and guarded speech, engages himself to Leonora.

Leonora is romantic as her name declares. But Leonora's guardian is eminently practical. Thinks the college living will do. And so Leonora is betrothed to it.

Leonora is sweet and twenty. With brown curls tied at the back of her head with a ribbon. With an arch smile. With a charming gift of singing—to the harp. *She* is not erudite. It is not the fashion for young ladies to be erudite in her time. When her elderly lover shows her specimens through a microscope—which is his ridiculous old way of expressing admiration for her—she is never able to decide whether she is looking at a flower or a beetle. She is wholly volatile and lovely and inattentive. All his love-making is full of instruction. It is an absurd, pedantic way of showing one's affection. But it is almost the only way he has. And there are worse, perhaps.

They go for their honeymoon to the Riviera. And the Riviera of forty years ago had much more of heaven and less of earth about it than the Riviera of the present day.

Beneath the deep eternal blue and the everlasting sunshine of its skies the Fossil's punctilious formality melts a little. He still goes about in a comforter and searches for specimens through near-sighted spectacles. But under the balmy warmth of an Italian sun—and of Leonora—his chilliness of manner experiences a slight thaw. It is thought that for those few brief weeks he is, in some

very slight degree of course, as another man might be. It is certain that his botanical friends at Cambridge are considerably disappointed in the collection of Italian flora he has to show them on his return home. Perhaps the *flos* he has studied most is the flowered-faced Leonora at his side. Leonora with her poke-bonnet hung upon her arm, with her curls shaken back and her wicked, laughing, roguish face turned up to his—looking for all the world like one of those ridiculous pictures in an old-fashioned Book of Beauty.

Leonora hates science—and stops the scientist's prosy mouth with a kiss. Leonora can't bear botany, and likes the flowers much better without those interminable Latin names tacked on to them.

Is she in love with her Fossil? Who shall say? It is preposterous and unnatural that she should be. But the preposterous and unnatural both happen occasionally.

Is her Fossil in love with her? A hideous old fright in goloshes, a tedious moth-eaten old bookworm has no right to be in love with anyone.

Then they go home to the country vicarage. The country vicarage is the incarnation of dullness, dampness, and ugliness. And Leonora sings about the house and scandalises the servants. The furniture is immensely solid and frightful. And Leonora's shawl is thrown here, and her work—in dreadful disorder—there, and roses from the garden in great bowls everywhere.

The Fossil, before he was married, had drawn up a solemn code of rules for the guidance of the household. A bell to tell them to get up; a bell to tell them to come down; a bell for prayers; a bell to begin breakfast, and a bell to finish it. And Leonora stops her ears when she hears these warnings, and is never less than ten minutes late for meals.

The Fossil sits in his study, scientific and theological, and Leonora breaks in upon this sanctum, without tapping, with her face glowing and laughing, and shuts up the abstruse work with a bang. She drags the Fossil into the garden, without his goloshes. When she wants to do something incompatible with his Evangelical principles, she lays her fresh face against his parchment cheek and says it isn't any good saying 'No,' because she really Must. And she always does.

The Fossil had a great scientific work in hand when he was married—an elaborate treatise upon the Paleozoic Epoch—but it proceeds lamentably slowly. He attempts to write in the evening

after dinner; and Leonora draws out the harp from its corner and sings to it. She sings 'Rose Softly Blooming' and 'Where the Bee Sucks,' and the great work does not proceed at all.

Then Leonora is ill, and the little daughter is dead before she is born. But Leonora is soon better—well enough to lie on the sofa and be sweet, foolish, and tiresome once more. The Fossil sits by her side gravely. Sometimes he brings her flowers, without their botanical names. He proses scientifically, as from long habit; but he looks the while at her transparent colour and her shining eyes, and the science is at times unscholarly and even incorrect. Leonora looks back at him with the old arch, laughing glance, and with something more behind it. It is a something they do not say—which can never be said. Perhaps the one thinks that the other does not know it. It may be so. To the last Leonora is very much better—'Nearly quite well' in answer to a daily question. On the last evening the Fossil is proposing a change to the seaside to complete her cure, and she dies with a smile and a jest, infinitely tender and selfless, upon her lips.

The neighbourhood, who could not be expected to like an 'eccentric old thing' like the Fossil, decides that he is shockingly heartless. He appears at Leonora's funeral actually in a red comforter. There are no signs of emotion upon his face. The lines may be a trifle deeper upon it, perhaps; but then he was always deeply lined, so that does not count.

He completes the great work; he draws up a new and more ridiculous code of rules for his household; and then he marries again. His wife is perfectly virtuous, amiable, and meaningless. She obeys the bells to a second; she never interrupts his studies; she never lets the children disturb him; his comforter and gloves are never out of their places. She is a sweet wife—a great deal too good for him.

He grows duller and more erudite yearly. A visitor describes him as a Lump of Science. He composes immensely learned and dreary sermons. The six yokels who usually form his congregation very sensibly go to sleep. The chill formality of his manner repulses the parishioners and frightens his children. He attempts to teach these children out of his fusty stores of scientific lore, but they are too awe-struck to comprehend anything—supposing that they had the ability, which they have not.

Their mother dies; they grow up and go out into the world. As far as the Fossil is concerned, they are virtually dead also; but

then, as far as he is concerned, they might almost as well never have been alive.

He is not more lonely than he has been for twenty years. He passes all day in his study among his books. That the room is damp and dreary matters little to him. The books are behind the time. He is behind the time himself. Between him and the musty work over which his old head bends comes sometimes a vision of the days that once were and never will be any more. The Italian sunshine above, the touch of a hand, the sound of a laughing voice, a girl's face, brilliant and tender, and he sees—Leonora.

THE ARBOUR IN THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Mrs. Lilburne returned from the picnic and dismounted at her own garden gate from the three-horse brake which had carried the party, she assured Mr. Chessall that she had had a most enjoyable day, and she meant what she said. Mrs. Lilburne was fond of picnics, and this had been a very successful one. Miss Lilburne too told Mr. Chessall that she had enjoyed herself immensely, and then when he smiled back at her, well pleased, she wondered whether she had been perfectly candid and truthful. Instead of going into the house she sat down on one of the garden-seats to think the matter over. In the first place, she was quite sure that she ought to have enjoyed the picnic very much indeed; for she was engaged to Mr. Chessall, and he had got up the whole thing chiefly to please her—he had told her so—and had consulted her weeks before as to who should be invited, and about all the other arrangements. Then the weather had been perfect, and nobody had been ill-natured or gloomy. Still Miss Lilburne felt that the affair had not been very lively, and she was inclined to think that it was because Mr. Chessall had lectured too much. The scene of their festivity had been Kelvington Castle, a famous old ruin, and Mr. Chessall had discoursed upon its antiquities at great length. He had talked a great deal of English history and told several anecdotes. She had read them all before; history and anecdotes alike were in the ‘Antiquities of South Devon,’ and it was plain that Augustus (Mr. Chessall) had got up the subject from that volume. And then his speech was so very slow, he used such big words, and she had noticed somebody yawning while he laboured on. And in the midst of his eloquence she had been picturing the future. When they were married, they would still be living in Knagford, and friends would come and stay with them in the summer—Knagford was such a pretty place, and there was good fishing—and all these friends would be taken to Kelvington Castle, and her husband would discourse to them as he had done to-day, and she would hear the same stories over and over again. The prospect seemed a little depressing. At the same time she felt that she ought not to feel

like that. One may detect faults in a husband ; a lover must be perfect.

Miss Lilburne's reflections were interrupted by her mother, who came out into the garden, holding a card in her hand.

'Adelaide,' she said, 'do you remember the Christian name of that Dr. Wilson who used to live in Knagford?'

A light blush sprang to the girl's cheek as she replied:

'I think it was Ernest, mamma ; I am nearly sure of it.'

'Well,' Mrs. Lilburne continued, handing the card to her daughter, 'a Dr. Ernest Wilson called while we were out this afternoon ; I suppose it's the same. But it's five or six years since he went out to Australia or somewhere there, so I wonder what he can want at Knagford now?'

Adelaide did not reply for some time ; at last she said slowly:

'I expect it is the same man, mamma. But it was Borneo he went to, not Australia. And he has come to see George. You know what friends they were!'

Here Mrs. Lilburne's youngest daughter, Maud, a tall, good-looking girl of eighteen, emerged from a sort of rustic arbour formed of trellis-work and overhanging creepers.

'Ah! you picnickers are back again,' she said abruptly. 'I'm very glad I didn't go, I had a most interesting novel, quite exciting. And I've just finished it, and everything turns out beautifully.'

Then her eye fell on the card which Adelaide was still twirling between her fingers.

'I saw him,' she exclaimed. 'It's the tall doctor—you remember him, Adelaide?—who used to go fishing with George. Only he's got dreadfully brown. I was in the arbour, you know, and I could see quite well, though he couldn't see me. When he found you weren't in he came away very slowly, and he stopped right in front of the arbour, and I was afraid he was coming in. But he didn't.'

This incident had quite changed the current of Adelaide's thoughts, but they were busier than ever in the new direction they had taken. At the 'high tea,' which, in deference to the solid nature of Mr. Chessall's lunch, had replaced the usual dinner, she was very absent-minded, and had to endure much raillery from her younger sister, who supposed she was thinking tenderly of the absent Augustus. Later on Mr. Chessall came, and Adelaide and he strolled about in the garden together, while Mrs.

Lilburne sat under the verandah, and beamed on them benevolently. This was the usual course of procedure in fine weather. Generally Mr. Chessall when left alone with his betrothed hadn't very much to say, but on this occasion the picnic had given him some material and put him in excellent vein. He was able to make depreciatory remarks on the dress of more than one young lady who had been present, and he found this exercise of his sarcastic powers very agreeable. So Adelaide's abstraction passed unnoticed, and the evening went by very pleasantly, and he was quite surprised when he found it was time to go.

As he pressed Miss Lilburne's hand at parting, he murmured, 'Six weeks and five days.'

The reference was to the wedding-day. Since that interesting date had been fixed, Mr. Chessall had never failed to remind Adelaide, every time he took leave of her at night, of the exact number of days which still intervened. He had an idea that this—or something like this—was expected of him.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning Mr. Chessall called at Mrs. Lilburne's before twelve o'clock. She was not very pleased at being called off from housekeeping cares, but disguised her annoyance admirably.

'Adelaide is out,' she said, 'walking with Miss Gray. She didn't expect you, I'm sure.'

Mr. Chessall smiled complacently at the mention of Miss Gray. Adelaide's friendship for Miss Gray amused him mightily.

'I shouldn't have come so soon,' he said, 'if I hadn't brought a piece of news. We have actually a distinguished stranger stopping at Knagford, and I thought you would like to hear about it.'

Mr. Chessall received every morning by post the 'Times' of the day before; he had brought the paper with him, and he now read an extract.

'The distinguished traveller and explorer, Dr. Wilson, has now left town, and betaken himself to the rural seclusion of Devonshire. He proposes to spend a month or two in the little village of Knagford, where he will devote himself to his forthcoming book.'

Mr. Chessall read this passage very slowly, and then looked at Mrs. Lilburne.

'It's not often that Knagford gets such a distinguished visitor,' he said. 'The papers have been full of him, you know. He had a great reception given him by the Geographical Society, and he was at the Prince's garden party, you know.'

Mrs. Lilburne replied vaguely. She was thinking how fortunate it was that she had been out the day before, when Dr. Wilson had called. For she had not cared to encourage his visits to the house five years before, and she might have been very chilly in her manner to 'the distinguished traveller and explorer' through being unaware of his social importance.

'I think I shall call on him at once,' Mr. Chessall continued. 'Now that we have got a lion, we ought to entertain him as well as we can.'

'He called here yesterday afternoon,' Mrs. Lilburne said, with some triumph in her tones.

Mr. Chessall's astonishment was evident, and Mrs. Lilburne was glad to have something to explain.

'Dr. Wilson was in practice here,' she said, 'before you came to Knagford. We knew him very well; he and George were very friendly.'

Mr. Chessall was duly impressed with this intelligence, and rose to take his leave.

'I think I shall call all the same,' he said. 'But what a pity that our picnic wasn't fixed for next week.'

Mrs. Lilburne appreciated to the full the importance of the news Mr. Chessall had brought; she set herself to scheme elaborate hospitality for the distinguished traveller. There must be a dinner party and a garden party, and perhaps another picnic—not at Kelvington Castle.

She propounded these schemes at the luncheon table, to which Adelaide had invited Miss Gray. That lady established the fame of Dr. Wilson by one clenching fact.

'His portrait was in all the illustrated papers of last week,' she said, 'and a short biography of him. But Knagford wasn't even mentioned.'

Adelaide made a public protest against her mother's schemes of entertainment.

'Why take so much trouble?' she said; 'I dare say he'd rather be quiet and write his book.'

This speech of Adelaide's roused the indignation of her younger sister.

'That's all very well for you, Adelaide,' she said; 'I suppose you prefer walking about the garden with your Augustus to anything else. You ought to think of others who are glad enough to meet a man who won't be quite as heavy and stupid as—as most of the men round Knagford are.'

When lunch was over Adelaide and Miss Gray sought the coolness and shade of the arbour in the garden. They sat together a long time in silence, till at last Adelaide broke out abruptly:

'Laura, it was here I saw him last, a month before he started on the Borneo expedition.'

Miss Gray's look expressed a sympathetic curiosity.

'He came to say good-bye,' Adelaide continued. 'I think he knew I should be alone. And he told me why he was going. The expedition was a dangerous one, but if it were successful he would gain wealth and some reputation, and then he wanted to know if—if I could give him any hope—in case——'

Miss Gray darted a look of mild reproach at her friend.

'You never told me anything about it till this morning,' she said.

'I couldn't, somehow,' Adelaide replied. 'I never mentioned it to anybody. I was very much afraid of mamma's knowing it.'

'What did you tell him?' Miss Gray asked, after a pause.

Adelaide hung down her head as she replied:

'I don't quite remember. But I think I told him that there was no one else—and that I hoped he would succeed. And I gave him two roses, one red and one white.'

'It was five years ago,' Adelaide continued, 'and I haven't seen him since. But now I am so afraid that he has come down to—to see me. If he has, it will be dreadful, for I know he is not a man who would take things quietly. If he should make a scene——'

And Miss Lilburne gave a little shiver of dismay.

Her friend hastened to reassure her.

'Very likely you are alarming yourself about nothing, Adelaide,' she said. 'Five years is a long time, and most men have very short memories.'

'But then, why has he come to Knagford?' Adelaide queried.

Miss Gray looked at her friend doubtfully.

'Tell me, Adelaide,' she said solemnly, 'did you really care for him?'

'I don't know,' Adelaide replied rapidly; 'you mustn't ask me. It was so long ago, and I was only just eighteen. Perhaps I did a little. But I wish he hadn't come down here just now. I wish that with all my heart and soul.'

'My dear child,' Miss Gray said warmly, 'don't frighten yourself unnecessarily. Dr. Wilson has very likely come down only for quiet and to write his book, as the newspapers say. He has perhaps forgotten all about what he said and felt five years ago.'

'It will be best for both of us if he has,' Adelaide replied solemnly. 'But I am afraid that——'

She let her sentence trail off into silence, and the two friends sat together for some time without speaking. Then they talked fitfully of other things, and by-and-by Miss Gray dozed and Adelaide was left to her own reflections. Miss Gray's drowsy noddings were banished by the sound of a footstep on the gravel path outside. Adelaide peered cautiously through the foliage, and then sank back in her seat, looking more than half frightened.

'It's Dr. Wilson,' she said faintly. 'Oh, Laura, you don't know how silly and timid I feel. I suppose I must see him.'

'You'll have to see him some time,' Miss Gray replied calmly. 'You may as well get over the awkwardness of the first meeting as soon as you can.'

When Adelaide got into the drawing-room she found that her mother had turned on the full flow of her affability for the benefit of the explorer of Borneo. How nice it was of him to find time to see his friends at Knagford! They had all been *so* interested in reading about him in the papers. And when would his book be ready? &c. &c.

Dr. Wilson made the appropriate replies to these effusions. He seemed very grave and a little formal, Adelaide thought. He greeted her quietly, and when she had had time to recover from her inward tremors she noticed his tint of bronze and how well it suited him.

Mrs. Lilburne, after he had left, broke into ecstasies of admiration.

'So handsome and dignified, you know. And this is his first call in Knagford. We must have George down from Plymouth and give a dinner party.'

At dinner, too, when Maud returned rather late from a tennis party, Dr. Wilson was still the theme.

'The Lamberts were talking of nothing else,' she cried. 'It

seems he is very rich as well as famous. He's got lots of shares in some new company or something. The Lamberts are very glad that he was their doctor when he was here before. Bella remembers him very well; he came when she had the mumps.'

Later on Mr. Chessall came and brought a heap of newspapers, from which he read extracts relating to the exploits of the recently returned traveller. He had also read up the article 'Borneo' in an encyclopædia, and was able to give a good deal of information about the island. Mrs. Lilburne was immensely interested. Adelaide listened almost in silence, and when taxed with being absent-minded, put forth the plea of headache.

She wandered about the garden with her lover as usual, and when they parted she received his customary enthusiasm as to the approaching day with a responsive smile. But all the time the image of the tall figure and bronzed face of the great traveller was flitting before her mental vision.

'Does he remember?' was the question that agitated her doubtful mind. And then she wondered if he had been told of her engagement to Mr. Chessall.

CHAPTER III.

ADELAIDE met Dr. Wilson several times during the next week, for Knagford was effusively hospitable to the famous traveller, and he showed himself the most amiable of lions and accepted every invitation. But at these gatherings—five o'clock teas and tennis parties and dinners—there was no opportunity of private speech. Mr. Chessall was generally by the side of his betrothed, and what was passing in Dr. Wilson's mind could only be guessed at.

But on the day after Mrs. Lilburne's dinner the expected explosion came.

Miss Gray was a district visitor, and Adelaide had accompanied her to a village about a mile and a half from Knagford. On their return they were overtaken by Dr. Wilson, who had been out fishing. His fish-basket excited Miss Gray's curiosity, and, being found empty, called forth her sarcastic powers, and conversation flowed merrily as the three journeyed together toward their respective homes. Suddenly Miss Gray stopped before a stile.

'I must call at this cottage,' she said, pointing to a picturesquely wretched hovel a hundred yards off, 'to ask after a

little patient. You two can sit on the stile and talk about Borneo till I come back. I won't be long.'

She glanced significantly at Adelaide as she tripped off.

When the two were left alone a long silence ensued. Adelaide felt that the moment was critical, and her heart beat furiously. At last, to break the horrible awkwardness of the silence, she made a great effort to command her voice, and said:

'When will you finish your book, Dr. Wilson? I suppose it will be full of dreadful adventures?'

She stole a timid glance at him as she spoke, and saw that she had guessed his mood rightly; for his face wore the tragic mask, and his eyes glowed.

'Adventures? Yes,' he replied, 'plenty of them—"moving accidents by flood and field." People will read all about them by-and-by, but they will not read why it was I went out there and risked my life for speedy gains. But I suppose you know. You can't quite have forgotten those old days when I loved you so and told you of my love, and you listened and—good Heaven! I remember everything you did and said. Out in the poisonous jungle I have lain awake night after night under the stars, and conjured up your face and recalled every word and smile—and then at last I come back just in time to witness your wedding.'

Dr. Wilson was fairly launched on a sea of wild words, and the poor girl listened in terror.

'I know I've treated you badly, Ernest,' she wailed at last; 'but be generous and forgive me. Think of the scandal, of what people will say about me. Go away and leave me in peace. What have you to gain by making me miserable—just when I ought to be happiest, too, before my wedding?'

Dr. Wilson looked at her sternly.

'Your happiness!' he cried. 'Ah! if you really love that man——'

Miss Gray joined them again.

'I haven't been long, have I?' she said, looking from one to the other. 'And I hope you have learnt a lot about Borneo, Adelaide.'

She kept up the conversation vigorously, talking glibly and making inquiries about tropical heat and tropical vegetation, till they reached Mrs. Lilburne's garden gate and Adelaide left them. Then her manner suddenly changed; she became grave and silent.

'Dr. Wilson,' she said at last, 'I hope I sha'n't give you offence if I speak to you very frankly.'

He looked at her gravely, with some comprehension of her meaning.

'Is it about——?' he began, and then hesitated.

'About poor Adelaide?' she replied. 'Yes, it is. I want you to go right away from Knagford and leave the poor girl alone. You think she has treated you badly, I know; and you've told her so this morning—I can see that. Let that be enough, and go away now and don't frighten the poor child with any more useless heroics.'

'She has told you everything, then,' Dr. Wilson said, half-savagely.

'I don't know about everything,' Miss Gray replied calmly, 'but a good deal. I've no doubt you feel very bad about the business, and I'm sure I wish things had turned out differently. Your devotion is very grand and noble, and I admire it very much indeed. But I do think you are just a bit unreasonable. Five years is a very long time, you know. And then you needn't plume yourself too much on your constancy, because you were in Borneo, it seems, nearly all the time, and I suppose the young ladies in that interesting island were not very serious rivals to poor Adelaide. However, we'll admire you very much indeed if you'll only go away and write your book in some other quiet village. And then you can think of her as badly as you like.'

They had reached the point where their ways parted, and Miss Gray turned off abruptly, not wishing to give him the chance of replying. But she faced round again to say quickly:

'Remember, Dr. Wilson, I've had my troubles, and they've left me a hopeless old maid.'

The doctor's first impulse was to be angry with Miss Gray as a meddlesome intruder, but her closing words touched him with compunction, and he only saw in her evidently well-meant interference a fresh proof of Adelaide's weakness. She hadn't even been able to keep his secret! He meditated much on the advice he had received, and tried to make up his mind to leave Knagford forthwith. To remain was torture—the heavy dull pain of disappointment, goaded by constant pin-pricks of momentary irritation. That eternal Mr. Chessall, with his constant thirst for miscellaneous information about 'your wonderful discoveries in that interesting island,' and his absurd tone of exaggerated deference. And then

to feel obliged to watch him walking or sitting with Adelaide, and to note his proud air of proprietorship; Mrs. Lilburne, too, had hit him hard once or twice. Her maternal pride over the approaching nuptials was hard to bear—she felt so pleased that dear Adelaide would not go away from Knagford—it was *such* a suitable match, and they were *so* much attached to each other, and she had seen it coming on for a long time before they were actually engaged, &c. &c.

Dr. Wilson's reflections drove him up to Mrs. Lilburne's on the afternoon of the next day. He was determined to see Adelaide once more alone, and then—to be guided by circumstances. One passionate appeal might yet win his cause, and if not, then he would choose some Tyrolese or Swiss mountain height, where he could work hard at his book, and where Nature's grandeur might help to make him forget feminine fickleness. He was so eager for prompt decision that he was very disappointed when he reached the cottage to find that Adelaide and her mother had gone to Plymouth for the day. The reflection that this errand had probably some relation to the approaching event was an additional exasperation.

He moved slowly away from the door, and then, led by a sudden impulse, turned towards the little arbour in the garden. He wanted to look once more at the place where he had taken his final farewell of Adelaide, five years before. It had been her favourite haunt, and he sighed profoundly as he thought of it. As he reached the entrance, he saw the place was not untenanted. A tall girl was sitting with a book before her intently reading. It was Maud Lilburne, and Dr. Wilson saw that she was not aware of his presence. He stood quite still for a few seconds watching her. Maud, with clear-cut features, seen in profile, her long lashes drooping a little, and her youthfully rounded figure bending a little forward, made a very pretty picture framed in the green of the foliage. One ray of sunlight, struggling through the leaves, lighted up the gold of her hair. Dr. Wilson gazed for a few seconds, and then a sigh betrayed him. Maud looked up and let her book fall in astonishment. But though surprised, she was not at all embarrassed to see the unexpected intruder on her solitude; there were no signs of confusion discernible behind the frank smile with which she greeted him.

'I see you haven't forgotten your way to our arbour,' she said. 'The creepers have grown, and it is much better hidden than it

used to be. Do you remember,' she continued, as they strolled back towards the garden, 'helping me with my German in there? You explained to me all about the separable verbs, and when I used to write my exercises, and had to remember the rules, I always thought of you.'

'What a dreadfully dull association!' Dr. Wilson said lightly.

'Perhaps it is,' she said, 'but it is better than none. I notice that you have completely forgotten me.'

Dr. Wilson made an emphatic disclaimer, while Maud looked at him searchingly.

'Tell me,' she said, 'one single thing you can remember about me.'

Dr. Wilson hesitated for some time, and then said:

'You used to be fond of climbing trees and sitting on the branches.'

Maud blushed slightly, and then laughed.

'You might as well have forgotten that. But the last time I climbed a tree was on my twelfth birthday. Let me have some more of your reminiscences.'

'You had a little strip of garden of your own,' the doctor continued, 'and I planted a young plum-tree for you.'

'Oh, you're beginning to remember things,' Maud said brightly. 'But you are not exactly right; for there are pears growing on your plum-tree. Come and see them.'

The tour round the garden lasted only a quarter of an hour, and then Dr. Wilson walked back slowly to his inn, thinking as he went of the young lady he had just left. How beautiful she was, and how frank and unsophisticated. Smiles strayed over his face as he mentally catalogued her perfections. Then he thought of Adelaide, and became appropriately gloomy again. His visit had not settled anything after all. Then he remembered that he had promised Maud to play lawn-tennis with her at a forthcoming party, and so would be obliged to stay in Knagford for nearly another week.

CHAPTER IV.

Two days after her friendly counsel and advice to Dr. Wilson, Miss Gray left Knagford and was away about a month. When she got back her first visit was to Mrs. Lilburne's. She had a good deal

to talk about, for she had been to town and visited the Academy, and noticed the toilettes at a great garden party, and Mrs. Lilburne was curious on many points, and for an hour or two after lunch was over the conversation continued. Then Miss Gray escaped with her friend to the seclusion of the garden arbour. They sat for a little while in silence, and then Adelaide said suddenly:

‘Laura, I wish I could tell you how miserable I am.’

Miss Gray’s glance expressed her sympathy.

‘Has anything happened?’ she asked doubtfully.

‘Nothing,’ Adelaide replied; ‘but he is still in Knagford.’

‘Has he spoken to you again?’ Miss Gray demanded.

‘No,’ Adelaide replied, ‘he has not had the opportunity. I have avoided him all I could. I’ve stopped at home till people are beginning to wonder what the matter can be. He goes everywhere, and I am sure he means to see me again and to speak to me again, or he wouldn’t stop here. And I am so terribly frightened, so afraid of what he will say and do—and the wedding so close now, and Augustus always talking about the honeymoon trip. I do think I am the unhappiest girl in all England, just when——’

Adelaide could get no further; tears intervened, and sobs which she could with difficulty repress.

‘This is mere foolish excitement,’ Miss Gray said, when her friend had grown calmer; ‘you mustn’t give way to it, you mustn’t really. There is nothing to be frightened about. Dr. Wilson may feel a little hurt, but then, you know, whenever a girl marries, there’s generally some man a bit doleful over it. But men are seldom as unhappy as they think they are, and besides, you know in these days people don’t make scenes. It isn’t good form.’

‘I shall be dreadfully afraid,’ Adelaide said slowly, ‘right up to the wedding, if Dr. Wilson stops in Knagford.’

‘Then we must get him to go away,’ Miss Gray replied decisively.

Adelaide buried her face in her hands. When she looked up again her cheeks were crimson.

‘Laura,’ she said, ‘I wasn’t quite frank and truthful with you the other day. I wanted to be, but somehow I couldn’t.’

She stopped for a few seconds, and then went on hurriedly:

‘I did love him in those days. And we were engaged. He used to kiss me sometimes. And when I gave him the roses I gave him a lock of hair too. And there were more things I said

—if he were to remind me of them I know I shouldn't be able to bear it. And yet—yet—I don't want him to go away without my seeing him.'

Miss Gray looked at her friend in silence. She was hurt by the previous want of confidence, and now she realised the full importance of Adelaide's confession.

'The wedding-dress came in this morning from Plymouth,' the other said suddenly, 'but they sha'n't induce me to try it on.'

'Adelaide,' Miss Gray replied solemnly, 'all this is very serious. You ought to have told me all this before. But I really think that you oughtn't to marry Mr. Chessall, feeling as you do. And yet now the wedding is so near——'

'You must find some excuse for putting it off, Laura,' the other cried vehemently; 'you must indeed.'

Miss Gray was very thoughtful as she walked home.

'Poor Adelaide,' she sighed, 'she has had a great deal to go through in these last days. But things will come off all right, I expect. There will be an explosion, and then the great Augustus Chessall will go on his tour by himself. If he hadn't been so dreadfully tedious, things might have turned out differently.'

Meantime Adelaide was still sitting in the arbour, thinking of many things. 'How will it all end?' was the question which circled round and round in her mind. By-and-by her imagination began to paint the ending she secretly wished for. Only within the last few days had she admitted even to herself what her heart really prompted; now that she had spoken to her friend, her ideas became more definite, and she could surrender herself to visions of a future in which Augustus Chessall had no part.

She was roused from her reverie by voices in the garden. She recognised her sister's lively staccato, and then, with an inward tremor, Dr. Wilson's deeper tones. Soon they came nearer, and Adelaide could hear what they were saying.

'You'll be back for the wedding,' Maud said; 'I shall be dreadfully disappointed if you are not.'

Dr. Wilson laughed.

'You want me to see you as bridesmaid,' he said. 'What vanity! But I'll be back before then. I don't think I could stop away from you if I tried.'

'And it is only a month since you discovered me in there,' Maud replied, nodding towards the arbour. 'You hardly spoke to me before.'

'I think I've made up since for the few days I lost,' he replied with a laugh. 'I dare say the gossips of Knagford are already beginning to talk about us.'

'Let them,' Maud replied scornfully, 'the silly things!'

'We sha'n't have to keep our secret very long,' Dr. Wilson said; 'just till your sister's wedding is over. Then I'll ask your mamma's consent, and I hope I shall get it.'

'Oh, there's no fear about that,' Maud replied frankly. 'You are a great man, you know, Ernest, and a very eligible son-in-law.'

All this the poor listener in the arbour plainly heard, and then a brief space of blessed oblivion blotted out all further sense of sound. It was but for a moment; slowly and quietly the consciousness of outside objects returned, and the memory of what had happened. The two were still talking in the garden, but they had moved further off, and their tones were low and indistinct. Peering through the leaves, Adelaide could see that they were facing each other, and that he was holding both her hands. Sinking back in her seat, she strained her ears to catch the light susurrus of tender tones. For some time the low babble lasted; then came a moment's silence, followed by a light, silvery laugh; the lovers were parting, and had kissed. Adelaide listened to the doctor's retreating footsteps grinding on the gravel of the garden path, and then heard the door close behind her sister.

The poor girl did not stir from her place. An hour passed, and evening came on, but she sat motionless, gazing blankly into the gathering twilight. Not a muscle of her face moved, not a tear dropped as the tumult in her mind rolled on, as the grey perspective of what must be obliterated presented itself to her.

Footsteps passed outside, but she hardly heard them; it was not till Mr. Chessall stood at the entrance that she roused herself from her long reverie.

'Adelaide!' he exclaimed, 'why are you sitting here alone in the dark? They told me you were at Miss Gray's. Is anything the matter?'

She moved a little to make room for him by her side.

'Don't let us go in just yet, dear,' she said; 'it's so pleasant out here. I don't think I ever knew the roses to smell so sweet.'

And she touched his hand with the tips of her fingers caressingly. Mr. Chessall was delighted with this prospect of a *tête-à-tête*. It seemed so appropriate to the circumstances. And Mrs. Lilburne would scold him gently for stopping out, which was also in

harmony with the situation. He talked of the balmy night, of the roses, and of the moon, a tiny circlet which he had noticed as he came in, while Adelaide let her hand rest in his and listened.

'The day is very near,' he whispered, becoming more tender; 'very near now. In a fortnight's time—just a fortnight to-day—we shall be at Lucerne. I imagine we shall be out on the lake, gazing at the summit of the Rigi, if that point is visible from the water. But on a still summer night, out on the water floating—alone—we two——'

Adelaide rose to her feet, disengaging her hand.

'I feel a little chilly,' she said. 'I think we had better go in.'

At her lover's suggestion they made one turn of the garden first. Adelaide was silent and unresponsive, but just as they were entering the house she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. Mr. Chessall was not used to such outbursts, and he was almost as much surprised as delighted. When they got in, Maud was telling her mother of the afternoon's tennis. She had played three sets with Dr. Wilson as her partner, and had won them all. Adelaide looked at her sister and saw her happiness beaming on her face. Mr. Chessall produced a packet.

'Adelaide,' he said, 'these are patterns of wall-papers for the little sitting-room; you must choose one. We shall generally be sitting there, you know, through the long winter evenings,' he added, dropping his voice; 'we mustn't have an ugly pattern always staring us in the face.'

Adelaide sighed faintly.

'To-morrow, Augustus,' she said, 'I'll choose wall-papers or do anything you like—to-morrow, but not to-night. I am tired and nervous to-night.'

When the time came for Mr. Chessall's going, Adelaide wrote hurriedly a short note.

'I want you to leave this at Miss Gray's, Augustus,' she said.

'Miss Gray!' he exclaimed. 'I really shall begin to be jealous of Miss Gray.'

'I want her to be here to-morrow,' Adelaide said calmly, 'when we are trying on—a new dress.'

'Oh! the wedding-dress,' Maud exclaimed. 'What fun! I didn't know it was come.'

Mr. Chessall darted a rapturous glance at his betrothed.

'I suppose I mustn't see it till the auspicious day arrives,' he said.

Adelaide threw a shawl over her shoulders and accompanied him to the garden-gate.

When she was gone Maud broke out suddenly:

‘Mamma, why does Adelaide look so unhappy?’

‘Unhappy, child!’ Mrs. Lilburne replied; ‘what nonsense you talk! I should be the first to see the signs of unhappiness if there were any.’

Mrs. Lilburne stopped a minute, and then added:

‘Girls are often a little low-spirited just before they are going to be married and leave their old home for good and all. It’s only natural, I’m sure.’

Maud considered this proposition carefully in the recesses of her young mind, and found it quite incredible.

‘I dare say Adelaide’s right enough,’ she thought, ‘though she looks a little sad. I should be dismal, I know, if I were going to marry Augustus Chessall, Esquire, and live in this dull place, and listen to all his long stories over and over again. But then I suppose Adelaide’s very much in love with him, and doesn’t see his faults at all.’

LAST WILLS AND TESTAMENTS.

'LONG life to the man who makes his own will!' So say the lawyers, most sincerely, feeling sure that a home-made testament will some day afford them plenty of work and numerous fees. But though it be dangerous for a man to make his own will without legal assistance, yet it is not safe for him to omit making it altogether; unless, indeed, he is content to leave it to the Law to dispose of his estate according to its very just and equitable codes. Yet, if he has any special wishes as to the disposition of his estate, it will be wise of him to prepare a special document setting them forth; and it will also be wise to execute this document as soon as he possesses any property of which he can so dispose.

There was, some five or six centuries ago, a fundamental difference between a Testament and a Will, into which I need not enter here, as in this paper I shall use the two terms indifferently. Testaments and wills are productions of civilised life; no such documents are known in the earliest days of any nation. Even among the Romans, whose law has remained as a model and basis for our own, the practice of making wills only grew up after centuries of civil life. They had no law of primogeniture, though it is supposed in most cases where the father had owned land some private arrangement was made among the sons by which the eldest became heir or successor. A daughter had no claim whatever on her father's estate, and a married woman was no longer one of her father's family, but of that of her husband.

When the custom of making wills grew up among the Romans a father could regulate the succession of his sons by testament. Dr. Muirhead, Professor of Roman Law in the University of Edinburgh, says that 'Patrician Rome had two varieties of testament—that made . . . under advice of the College of Pontiffs, and that made by soldiers in the hearing of a few comrades on the eve of battle.¹ . . . Both still remained in use in the early republic;

¹ Called a *nuncupative* will, 'from the word *nuncupatio*, a term of the civil law, originally used to express the declaration of the testator's intentions, whether the testament was written or not; but later usage appropriated the term "*nuncupative*" to testaments where there was no written will, and where the testator declared his wishes orally.'—R. R. Sharpe, *Cal. of Wills, &c.* '*Nuncupare est palam nominare.*'—*Gaius*.

but were in course of time displaced by the general adoption of that executed with the copper and scales (*testamentum per aes et libram*).

This curious expression, *with the copper and scales*, takes us back to the earliest and most barbarous ages of Rome, to the time when a man bought his wife as he bought his goods and chattels. It reminds us that there was a time when coin was not used in barter, but metal was weighed in exchange for commodities. This method of purchase has left its traces in our word *pound* of money, and in the French *livre*, and in their equivalents in other tongues. In the old Roman days, when a man bought land, food, or what not, he weighed out the price in copper; later on, when the primæval practice of taking a wife by forcibly carrying a woman away from her family had yielded among the patricians to the custom of buying her, the bridegroom purchased her, like other things, by *copper and scales*; the next step, according to Dr. Muirhead, was the adoption of this method of marriage by the plebeians. 'The scales, the *libripens*, and the five witnesses were all there; but as there was no real price to be paid, the only copper that was needed was a single *raudusculum*.' This form of purchase reminds us of the nominal rent among ourselves of a peppercorn; and of such curious tenures as the famous Caistor gadwhip, and the roses in other places. The testaments made on the eve of battle or before the College of Pontiffs 'were in course of time replaced by the general adoption of that executed with the copper and scales,' which kind of will is sometimes represented as a written instrument, but is supposed by Dr. Muirhead not to have been a testament but a makeshift for one. The 'copper and the scales' lingered on as a legal term, but had no longer an actual existence; much as the red adhesive wafer affixed to a modern lease only represents the wax seal of former times.

We find that the next stage in the history of the testament was 'marked by the introduction of tablets in which the testamentary provisions were set out in writing;' and to make this kind of will valid the copper and the scales were still introduced. After the testator had declared to his witnesses that the tablets contained his testament, they were 'sealed by testator, officials, and witnesses, the seals being on the outside, and over the cord with which the tablets were tied.' Thus we perceive that the witnesses sealed, but did not sign, the testator's tablets. In the case of the will made on the eve of battle neither testator nor

witnesses could sign or seal; the whole affair was merely verbal. It was the *intention* of the testator to which the witnesses bore testimony; and the *intention* of the testator is that which the law seeks to carry out, now as then. So Professor Lorimer, in his 'Handbook of the Law of Scotland,' remarks: 'Whatever can be positively ascertained to have been the wish of the deceased with reference to . . . his property, will be carried into effect, provided that they are neither inconsistent with public law, immoral, insane, nor impossible. The will of a fool being thus valid, and that of a madman invalid, many of the difficulties which arise in judging of the validity of wills are occasioned by the uncertainty of the line which divides folly from madness.' It was laid down, somewhat satirically, by a Scottish judge that 'a testament does not require the same degree of mind as in making a bargain; it is sufficient if the party be capable of judging of each part as it is presented to him.'

A man's will naturally is of vital interest to his heirs and successors; but it may concern many others beyond that small circle. It may be an historic record of the state of the country and of the Church at the time when it is made; it may throw light on religious and civil customs likely to pass away; it may show the real character of the testator and of his contemporaries. Indeed, the learned Surtees Society has thought it well to devote much time and labour to the subject of early *wills and inventories*; and from the volumes published by that Society I draw much of my information.

The will of William de Karileph, Bishop of Durham, founder of the present Cathedral, who died in 1095: he left with his will an inventory of the books which he bequeathed to the Church. Flambard, Pudsey, Poor, and other Bishops of Durham did the same. These wills were entirely in Latin, as were at that time those of lay people, men and women. Most of them contain provision for Masses for the repose of the souls of the testators. As we come down the centuries the documents grow more interesting; English is used in codicils and interspersed with the Latin of the lawyers. Matilda, Lady of Dalden, wife of Sir William Bowes, Knight, bequeathed to one of her god-daughters 'j romance boke is called ye gospelles.' Why she called the Gospels a 'romance-book' is an undecided question. To another lady she left 'unum librum yat is called Trystram,' the *Sir Tristram* of Thomas the Rhymer, indubitably a romance. The will of John Trollop, Esq.,

of Thornley, was witnessed by Lionel de Claxton, who when young was a schoolboy at Durham. He had a fight with a schoolfellow in the Abbey churchyard, and one side or the other sustained a damaged nose; it became necessary to reconsecrate the churchyard, which had been desecrated by the shedding of blood!

The will of John Bancks, 'laboringe man,' 1542, disposes of more than three acres and cow; his body is to be buried in the church of Gateshead, 'with all the prests and clerks therto belonging.' To his son George he leaves two houses, to his son Thomas another house, to Margerye his daughter six sheep; there are also other bequests. The special bequests of cloaks, caps, kirtles, gowns &c. in the sixteenth century indicate that clothing must have been far more valuable and more durable then than now. An inventory of the goods of Richard Swinborne shows that he died possessed of twenty pounds in gold, two chests, two pair of tongs, two daggers, one sword, with certain tackett nails, one hammer, and his raiment; a curious list of goods and chattels.

John de Warenne, eighth and last Earl of Surrey of his family, left a will in the French language; it is a valuable document in the eyes of antiquaries; one remarkable bequest is that to his son William of 'ma bible que j'ai fait faire en Fraunceys.' Provision is generally made in these ancient wills for candles to burn on the day of the testator's funeral, or at other times during High Mass. Roger de Fauconberg, 1391, orders '*pro luminare circa corpus meum, die sepulturæ meæ, v tapers continentes quilibet iiij libras ceræ.*' Margery, widow of Sir William de Aldeburgh, in her will dated 1591, leaves to her late husband's old nurse a scarlet gown set with fur. Sir William Mowbray, of Colton, desires that one taper shall be '*entour mon corps, saunz plus lune . . . ou aucun autre vaynglory entour mon vile corps.*' The mixture of English which alloys these testaments, composed mainly in old French, makes them very quaint and curious. John of Eston of Scardlburgh leaves 2*d.* '*pro pulsacione campanarum et le belman portand' campanum,*' &c. Nicholas de Schiebrun mentions '*unam cistam de fir, ferro ligatum, et unum er pyk*'—that is to say, 'one chest of fir wood, bound with iron, and one ear-pick.' John Croxton of Yorke, chaundler, composed his will entirely in English; he is lavish of wax candles to be burnt on the day of his funeral, and also gives 'an ymage of iiij pund of wax & xxiiij lb. of wax to the segirstane' to the fynding of the hegh

¹ I presume, *sacristan*.

auter.' Even in death he sought to benefit his own trade. John Fairfax, Rector of Prestcote, ordered a public dinner to celebrate his burying: six oxen, twenty sheep, six quarters of wheat, and ten of malt, were to be provided. Scales, if not copper, were here needed on a large scale, if I may be allowed to say so.

I have spoken above of the verbal wills made by Roman soldiers on the eve of battle: the Surtees Society prints entire a will made by Sir Ralph Newmarche of Whatton, Notts, and of Bentley, Yorks, on the battlefield of Shrewsbury, probably, as the learned editor suggests, after he had received his fatal wound. It is in Latin, but in English would run thus: 'In the name of God, Amen. 22nd day of July, 1403,¹ I, Ralph Newmarche, Knight, of Whatton, make my nuncupative will in this manner. First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, Blessed Mary, and all the Saints, and my body to ecclesiastical sepulture. I leave all my goods to Elizabeth my wife, and to pay my debts, and to provide for the welfare of my soul. I also constitute Elizabeth my wife my executrix. Given at Salop the above-named day and year.' Another very touching document is the will of William Manning, dated from the leper-house of Monkbridge in York: he gives half a pound of wax to be burnt at his funeral, sixpence to the works going on in York Minster, sixpence to the Monks of Knaresborough, and the residue to his wife. In 1442, John Pudsey, a tradesman, made a short will; in it he left to 'Thomæ Hirste, skynner, arcum meum cum le grene balt, et vij sagittas pacock-federde.' No doubt peacock-feathered arrows were much esteemed in those days. And women's dress must have been more highly thought of than it is now, for the female testators always name their garments; as, for instance, Agnes Selby, in 1464, leaves a black gown and a green one to Agnes Hastings, and her second-best green gown to Joan Hastings. And yet, oddly enough, it appears from a clause in the will of Sir John Scrope, fourth Lord Scrope of Masham and Upsal, 'that the Parliament robe of a peer became, upon his death, the perquisite of his servants, and that if his family wished to retain it, money was to be paid for its redemption.'

Towards the end of the sixteenth century wills were no longer drawn up in Latin, but in English; no doubt when the Latin language gave way to the vernacular in the services of the Church it did the same in legal documents. William Preston, 1581,

¹ The battle was fought on July 20, 1403.

enumerates his 'blacke clocke lynned with bayes,' his 'payre of grograyne brichis,' his 'blacke dobleat of Doche fostyone,' his 'rosset breches of brod-cloth,' his 'payre of knyte hose,' and 'all his showes,' as well as his 'bockes ledar gloves;' these, and some other articles of wearing apparel, are left as bequests. The great number of horses belonging to some of the testators whose wills are before me is very remarkable. William Emerson, 1584, possessed at his death seven horses and mares; Ralph Richeson, 1585, had seven; William Grey, miller, 1585, four; Nicholas Ridley, 1586, five. In days when all travelling was done on horseback the stables of ordinary middle-class persons must have been well filled with *nagges* and *meares*: Richard Briscoe left seventeen. The value of such animals seems to have varied from 1*l.* to 15*l.* 'An old angell' was a frequent legacy, often said to be 'as a token.'

When we come to the subject of curious clauses in wills, we find a sort of grim humour connected with the prospect of death and the last offices of religion. One Thomas Broke, landowner, 1417, desired to be buried without coffin or lid, but only in a 'grete clothe'—this by way of humility. Lady Peryne Clanbowe, 1422, gives to Elizabeth Joye a 'booke of Englyssh cleped "Poor Caytife,"' which book was a collection of tracts against abuses in the Church of Rome. Sir Roger Salwyn, Knight, of York, 1420, says: 'I will that som goode man be ordeine to goo for to Iherusalem in pilgremage and as far as is cost is less than C li in comyng and goyng;' this is for the good of the testator's soul, and gives one a glimpse of the tourist of the fifteenth century. William Newland, of London and Normandy, 1425, desires 'a man to be found to go to Rome and to Jerusalem,' another to go from the *Sword* in Fleet Street unto Canterbury barefoot, another to ride or go unto St. Michael's Mount, and another to St. James of Compostella; their expenses to be paid. The pilgrim who went barefoot must have envied the other three. Richard Bokeland, London, 1436, left money that a million Masses might be said for his soul. If said at the rate of one a day they would extend over three thousand years; if at the rate of three a day, which would be a tolerably rapid progress, they should now have still more than six hundred years to run! The above curious clauses are gleaned from Mr. F. J. Furnivall's 'Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate.'

In a volume entitled 'Wills from Doctors' Commons' are

printed the testaments of some noted persons. One is that of Sir Hugh Myddelton, 1631, and deals chiefly with his property in the New River Waterworks. The only humorous clause is this: 'I give and bequeath to all my men servants (except the boy in kitchen) five pounds each;' the said boy is to have 'fortie shillings.' Sir Henry Vic, of Guernsey, 1669, leaves 3*l.* to his boy Robert Browne. The will of Elizabeth, daughter of James I. and wife of Frederick V., Prince of the Palatinate, has a painful interest. She urged her husband to put himself at the head of the Protestant princes; he was elected king by the Bohemians, who were aiming at the downfall of the Emperor Ferdinand II. This document, dated 1661, is in French, and couched in the first person plural, with such awkward expressions as '*à ma fille nous donnons*;' the unhappy Queen appears to have had little to dispose of beyond her personal jewels. Speaker Lenthall wishes to be buried under a 'plain stone with this superscription only, *Vermis sum.*' This, surely, was conscious humour, though, perhaps *worms*—not a *worm*—would have been more appropriate a short time after his interment. Richard Baxter, the author of the 'Saints' Rest,' in his testament of 1689, leaves money to be spent on 'flannen wascoats' for poor Londoners.

In those large volumes entitled 'Calendar of Wills proved and enrolled in the Court of Husting, London,' edited by Reginald R. Sharpe, D.C.L., we find some very curious facts scattered through an enormous mass of information without much interest for the ordinary reader except as regards the editor's foot-notes; a few of these plums I have picked out from the indigestible dough in which they are embedded. I know that Dr. Sharpe will pardon my irreverence towards his splendid work. The wills of which he prints abstracts were enrolled between the years 1258 and 1685; and he says in his introduction that those of the years 1348–9 far exceed in number those of any other years, owing, in all probability, to the awful plague, known as the Black Death, which at that time ravaged all Northern Europe. Whole families were swept away together. The will of Nicholas de Barton mentions his wife Alice, but before the will was proved she too was dead. Benedict, son and executor to his father Richard de Shordich, died before the probate was granted; Thomas Fraunceys makes certain bequests to Agnes his wife, but her will closely follows his on the roll; and the wills of Richard de Stokwell and Hugh his son were proved on the same day. Occasionally a will was enrolled during

the testator's lifetime; for Richard de Stratford and William Kelwedon brought their wills into court for the purpose of probate.

John de Kyrkeby, Bishop of Ely, 1290, bequeathed 'to the bishopric of Ely all his houses at Holeburne in the suburb of London, together with vines, gardens, and other appurtenances, in pure and perpetual alms.' Dr. Sharpe says, in a note, that the 'gardens' are now known as Ely Place; and that 'the gardens attached to the bishop's palace, which survive only in the name of Hatton Garden, were a characteristic feature of the neighbourhood.' He then quotes the well-known passage from Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, act iii. scene iv., and adds: 'Vine Street still bears witness to the Bishop's vineyard, as Kirby Street still recalls the Bishop's name.'

About the beginning of the fourteenth century 'London Bridge' appears often as a legatee, citizens leaving money for the building works there going on. Margery Bacheler gives her gold wedding-ring to London Bridge!

Walter le Taillour de Alegate devised 'to Richard his son the reversion of a tenement held by Richard le Bakere for life, receiving yearly, immediately after the testator's death, a rent of half a mark, and weekly one penitourte in respect of the said tenement.' The penitourte was a penny tart!

William de Elsingg, mercer, left tenements and rents to build and endow a hospital for the poor of both sexes, 1348. This foundation was first known as Elsing Spittle, and afterwards as Sion College. It had been established by the testator during his life with a *custos* and four secular priests, but he had changed the secular canons for canons regular of the Order of St. Augustin, the Bishop of London adding one to their number. Among the innumerable 'pious uses' for which provision is made in all wills before the Reformation, we find this by William de Rothyng, merchant, 1349: 'To the Hospital of St. Thomas in Suthwerk an annual quitrent for the maintenance of a lamp to burn by night among the weak and sickly there housed.' Not a few wealthy citizens left money to anchorites (Richard de Walsted, 1365, left bequests to the anchoresses, i.e. female anchorites of London), and hermits living within the boundaries of London. John de Holegh, hosier, 1351-2, left an immense number of pious bequests—to orphans, to pilgrims, to lepers, to anchorites; to every one going with naked feet to offer a penny at the shrine of

Blessed Mary of Walsyngham; for an image of St. Mary, and a crown for it; and for a copy of his testament to be written in a missal to be used at the high altar of St. Mary-le-Bow. One Johanna Cros desires that eleven thousand *Paternosters* and so many *Aves* be said in honour of the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, of whom it is recorded, says Dr. Sharpe, that relics were found in the cross of the belfry of St. Paul's in 1313-14.

About this time Londoners began to mention gifts of books in their wills; and Simon Bristowe, clerk, 1374, leaves his portifory with music lying in quires to the church of St. Mary Aldermanbury. John de Kenyngton, Rector of St. Dunstan's towards the Tower, left a book of the Epistles to that church, and also money to buy books. But we find little encouragement given in these early times to literature or learning. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1557, Thomas Lewen, ironmonger, directs that the sum of five pounds shall be divided between two poor scholars, one to be of Oxford and the other of Cambridge; and Dr. Sharpe adds in a note that 'the sum of 15*l.* is now paid yearly to each of the exhibitioners, instead of 2*l.* 10*s.*' During the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII. bequests for 'pious uses' become rare, and the last of such bequests is made by John Watson, brewer, 1544. Candles, Masses, and trentals¹ have disappeared from wills, and companies (no longer called guilds), hospitals, scholars, and prisoners appear more frequently as legatees. The will of Sir Thomas Gresham, mercer, 1579, indicates the estimation in which the new learning was held in Elizabeth's reign; he provides that lectures shall be read on divinity, astronomy, music, geometry, law, physic, and rhetoric. 'None to be chosen to read lectures so long as he be married.' The Gresham Lectures are still a power in the land; I do not know whether the lecturers are at this day exclusively bachelors and widowers!

In 1585, Edmund Bragge, haberdasher, being *in extremis*, made a nuncupative will. 'Upon Roger his son asking him, "What will you geve my mother?" meaning Elizabeth, wife of the testator, he then and there replied: "I have saide already three-score poundes a yeare yf my lande will soe farre extende, she to be owner of the lande." And the aforesaid Elizabeth then asked: "What will you give your sonne Edward?" to which the testator replied: "I will geve him thirtie poundes a yeare. I can geve him noe lesse."' I quote this in full as a specimen of a nuncupa-

¹ Thirty Masses.

tive will, whether made by a Roman soldier on the eve of battle or by a citizen of London on his deathbed.¹

Strange and eccentric bequests are seldom found in early wills, which mostly bear a strong family likeness. But I may mention that John Northampton, draper, 1397, left to the Carthusian monks of London each half a pound of ginger; and, every Lent, a pound of dates, a pound of figs, and a pound of raisins. Our modern young Carthusians would be pleased if the legacy extended to them.

Some curious actions concerning wills are recorded in Shaw's 'Digest of Cases.' 'A deed of settlement by a man seventy-seven years old, who could not read writing, in favour of his agent, which was scrolled by the agent without any evidence of instructions, and not read over and not delivered to the grantee, but retained by the agent till the grantee's death,' was 'set aside.' This seems to have been a case in which the grantee's imbecility was only equalled by the agent's roguery. Shaw mentions a 'question as to the construction of a clause bequeathing to a lady who resided with the testator "the whole of the furniture in her own room and any other she may choose."' Might she not choose every bit of furniture in the house? The words were held to be 'limited to a power of choosing liberally, but fairly, any other articles of similar extent and value with the furniture of her own bedroom.' That interpretation seems to have been suggested by common sense; but what uncommon sense was it which suggested 'a direction by an uncle in a deed of settlement, to trustees, that they should pay certain sums to his nephew (who was his heir *alioqui successeurus*) on condition that he should not reside in the same house with his mother.' Yet this strange condition was 'held to be lawful.'

The famous Thellusson Will Case is, perhaps, the most extraordinary legal action dealing with a testamentary document which has ever come before the English public. One Peter Thellusson, a native of Geneva, settled in London as a merchant and acquired an enormous fortune. He died in 1797 at Plaistow, in Kent, leaving to his widow and six children about 100,000*l.* There was also some 600,000*l.* which he left to trustees to invest; this sum

¹ 'The setting up of nuncupative wills became so often associated with fraud that the Legislature interposed, and such wills were practically abolished by the stringent provisions enacted with respect to them by the Statute of Frauds (29 Car. II. c. 3).'-R. R. Sharpe, *Cal. of Wills, &c.*

was to accumulate during the lives of his three sons and of all his grandsons; and then the result of this scheme was to become the property of the eldest male descendant of his three sons, with benefit of survivorship. This will was established by decree of the House of Lords in 1805. All went quietly until the testator's last grandson died in 1856. Then the question arose as to whether the eldest male descendant, or the male descendant of the eldest son, should inherit. After three years the House of Lords decided for the latter. It is said that the legal expenses attending the dispute brought the property down to about its original value. An Act of Parliament was passed to prevent a testator from leaving his property to accumulate during more than twenty-one years after his death. This Act was passed in the year 1800, and is commonly known as the Thellusson Act.

A cursory glance at mediæval wills shows that but a few baptismal names were in use among the men of those days. John, Roger, William, Richard, Nicholas recur again and again with extraordinary monotony; but the female names present a bewildering variety. From them I select, for the consideration of parents and sponsors, a few of the more remarkable: Cryna, Gunnora, Hodierna, Tiffania, Slymina, Lenota, Orabilia, Goldcorn, Idonea, Milsenda, Helewysia, Chera, Celestria, Roesia, Freschesaunchia.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

DOUGLAS PAYS A FRIENDLY CALL.

DOUGLAS COLBORNE had been more surprised than displeased by the receipt of the telegram which announced his cousin's sudden return to England and requested a week's hospitality. Having been informed of Lady Florence Carey's engagement to Lord Galashiels, he had, of course, guessed at once what had caused the young man to change his plans, and although he did not believe that Frank would gain anything by a desperate appeal to the constancy of a girl who had been certain from the first to prove inconstant, he was willing to grant him any opportunity of making such an appeal that proximity might afford. Moreover, he himself was feeling very dull and lonely; for his mother and his sister, who had been staying with him during the summer, had now departed on a round of visits, and, for various reasons, he had not cared to invite anybody else to occupy the vacant rooms which his housemaids had ceased to dust or sweep. He would not have dreamt of asking Frank to come and keep him company; still he was not sorry that Frank's personal inclinations should have prompted him to adopt that course.

Frank, when he arrived, was portentously mysterious, alleging that he had 'one or two things to do' which had necessitated his journey, but that he would in all probability set out for Italy once more in a few days, and disclaiming with an earnestness which would not have deceived an infant any object in visiting Buckinghamshire save that rendered imperative upon him by considerations of gratitude and the ties of relationship. As, however, he was not questioned, (which was rather provoking), and as his temperament was the reverse of secretive, he had not been many hours under Douglas's roof before he had to all intents and purposes divulged his true errand.

'I know nothing at all about it,' his host said, in reply to

certain leading observations which were made after dinner; 'all I have heard is that Lord Galashiels and Lady Florence are to be married before the end of the year. If you want to hear more, you had better apply at head-quarters, hadn't you? Not that I should advise you to do anything of the sort; because I don't see what more there is to be heard—to any purpose. Do as you like, though; it's your affair, not mine. You will end, most likely, in coming round to my opinion that women aren't worth a tenth part of the bother that we give ourselves about them.'

'Some women are worth nothing at all; but it's absurd to condemn them in the lump, as you do,' answered Frank, with equal veracity and sagacity. 'I'm not prepared to say,' he continued, 'whether I shall apply at head-quarters for further information about Lady Florence's engagement—supposing that there really is an engagement. I may or I may not. But there are worse plans than applying at head-quarters, and, between you and me, I doubt whether you would regret it if you were to give that plan a trial.'

He then related how he had chanced to fall in with the Countess Radna at Bellaggio and how her language and demeanour had convinced him that she was by no means irreconcilable. Naturally, he failed to convey a similar impression to his cousin by the delivery of the only message which she had been pleased to send to him; and Douglas, after this had been duly communicated to him, merely remarked:

'It was quite unnecessary for her to say that; I never for one moment imagined that she had authorised the Baroness von Bickenbach to write to me and I didn't attach the slightest importance to the letter. I take it that my wife, who isn't a child, knows her own mind. It is possible, though I don't think it is probable, that she would like me to eat humble pie once more; but I have done so once, and once is enough. Please don't set me down as an unmannerly brute if I beg you to drop the subject.'

Frank said no more—being, indeed, provided with other subjects of a more engrossing and urgent character to think about—but Douglas was angered and irritated beneath his assumed composure, and during the whole of the following day he had much ado to restrain himself from speaking snappishly to the various persons with whom he was brought into contact. 'Why can't she let me alone!' he kept saying to himself. 'We are separated by her own wish; I haven't attempted to interfere with her in any

way since she left me, and surely she might be magnanimous enough to return the compliment! But magnanimity isn't included in the list of her virtues.'

The list of her virtues, had it been drawn up at this time by him, would in truth have proved a remarkably short one. Nothing is more easy or more common than to fall in love with a woman whose conspicuous virtues are few in number; but nothing is more difficult than to remain in love with one to whom certain good qualities have been mistakenly ascribed; and this was Douglas Colborne's present case. He had unquestionably made a mistake; his wife had proved—she had even, apparently, taken some trouble to prove—to him that she was not what he had imagined her to be. Perhaps she was not to blame for his vain imaginings; yet he could not acquit her of all blame in the matter, nor had he been able to think of any adequate reply to Loo, who, during her sojourn at Stoke Leighton, had more than once lamented openly and unblushingly that he should have gone so far afield in search of a wife, when a lady who would have made an admirable wife for him in all respects might have been found within an easy walk of his home. He had allowed Loo to make speeches of that kind because they had not been as disagreeable to him as, possibly, they ought to have been; he had likewise allowed her to put an end to an estrangement to which no spoken allusion had been made, and he was now once more upon friendly terms with Peggy Rowley, although their old intimacy could hardly be said to have been renewed.

Thus it suggested itself to him almost in the light of a duty, on the morning when Frank Innes, without stating whither he was bound, started off to meet Lady Florence Carey in a country churchyard, that he should ride over to Swinford Manor and hold a consultation with one of Frank's most trusted friends and advisers. Obviously the young man meditated some foolish proceeding or other, and obviously it behoved those who were interested in him to ascertain what notion he had taken into his head. So Douglas, after disposing of a solitary luncheon, ordered his horse and trotted over highways and byways to his neighbour's residence.

He was incorrect in his surmise that Frank had visited her on the previous day, and it was neither with him nor with his cousin that her attention was occupied when he hooked his hunting-crop into the handle of her door-bell. Miss Rowley was at home, the

butler said, but he believed she was out in the garden ; and it was only after a delay of five minutes that Mr. Colborne was requested to be so kind as to join her there. He found her deep in conversation with her head-gardener, who touched his hat, on the advent of the new-comer, without pausing in a harangue upon the ravages of black fly, while Peggy merely held out her hand and did not turn her head.

'That is all very fine,' said she, when Peter had made an end of speaking ; 'but the upshot of it seems to be that other people can grow chrysanthemums as they ought to be grown and that we can't. Is black fly unknown at Lord Burcote's place?'

Then she turned to her visitor and appealed to him, as an impartial observer, to say whether it wasn't too bad. 'Peter chooses to sneer at Lord Burcote's single stems ; but he is obliged to admit that Lord Burcote's man has succeeded where he has failed. I'll trouble you just to look at that *Mrs. Alpheus Hardy!*—and at that *Louis Boehmer!* Did you ever see such specimens?'

'I'm no judge,' answered Douglas, laughing. 'Comparing your chrysanthemums with my own, I should have said that you had every prospect of a magnificent show ; but I daresay the Burcote establishment produces some troublesome growths. It has produced one which is not unlikely to give me trouble, I know ! In point of fact, I came here to talk to you about her, and I shall be thankful to be reassured, if you can reassure me, when you have done pointing the finger of scorn at your flower-pots.'

Peter Chervil shot a sharp side-glance at the speaker ; but Peggy's countenance expressed nothing but innocence and interrogation. She continued to make trenchant criticisms and issue orders for some little time ; but eventually she motioned to her visitor to follow her towards the house and invited him to explain his errand.

'If you have come to rebuke me about Florence Carey's engagement, you have come to the wrong place,' said she. 'I have done all I could to prevent it ; but I couldn't do anything worth speaking of, and I knew from the first what the end of it all would be. When you write to your cousin, you may tell him from me that he has only himself to thank. I don't suppose there was ever much chance for him ; but he might have had a try, instead of bolting out of the country and leaving things to take their course.'

'Frank has come home,' answered Douglas ; 'I thought he must have been to see you yesterday. Anyhow, I am pretty sure

that he has gone to see Lady Florence today, and I wish he hadn't! I have no wish to rebuke you, or anybody else, about the girl's engagement; on the contrary, she is welcome, so far as I am concerned, to marry whom she pleases, except Frank. But I'm rather uneasy about him. I can't make out what he is after, and I was in hopes that you might be able to enlighten me.'

'Oh, he has come back, has he?' said Peggy. 'No; I can't throw any light upon his intentions. He hasn't had the impudence to impart them to me, I am glad to say, and I should have refused to listen to him if he had attempted anything of the sort. At the same time, I am free to confess that nothing would delight me more than to hear of his having cut out Lord Galashiels and snatched Florry away from the clutches of that unnatural old mother of hers.'

'How could he do that?'

'I'm not saying that he can or that he will; only, as you are sure that he has gone to see Florry, it seems probable that he has some object in view, and it doesn't seem very probable that his object in travelling all this distance was to congratulate her.'

'That's just it,' observed Douglas meditatively.

Peggy looked at him and laughed. After a short interval of silence, she said: 'I don't think there is any great need for you to distress yourself; Florry is too much cowed by Lady Burcote to break out into open rebellion, and Mr. Innes is—well, he isn't as rash as I should like him to be. So it will be all right, and he will return to his musical studies presently, and you will be able to return to the management of foreign affairs with a quiet mind.'

'Why do you always talk as if I cared about nothing except my own comfort?' asked Douglas, in a somewhat injured tone.

'I wasn't aware that I had. When did I talk in that way?'

'Well, it is true that you haven't talked much to me in any way of late,' answered Douglas; 'but whenever you do honour me so far, you take up the same sort of tone as you are taking now. And I can't quite understand what I have done to deserve it.'

The complaint was a sufficiently absurd one; but the injustice of it was a good deal less provoking to Peggy than it would have been to a man. She perceived that he was vexed with her for having shunned him, not on account of any real or imaginary change in her opinion of him; and injustice arising from such a cause is seldom found unpardonable by the gentler sex. She did not, however, wish to embark upon a line of defence, which might

lead to embarrassing explanations ; so she contented herself with begging him briskly not to be so silly.

'If I meant to accuse anybody of thinking a little bit too much about his own comfort, it was Mr. Innes, not you,' she declared. 'But, as a matter of fact, we all think about our own comfort ; and quite right too ! There's no special merit in being uncomfortable : otherwise, I dare say you would be a good candidate for a prize ; for you generally seem to succeed in making yourself so. Why quarrel with me for trying to persuade you that you needn't make yourself so about your cousin ?'

He had no quarrel at all with her on that score, and he hastened to assure her that he had none. 'But it's useless to pretend,' he added, 'that we are as good friends as we used to be. You know very well that we aren't, and I suppose you also know why we aren't. I don't.'

'Well, I believe there *was* a sort of a coolness,' answered Peggy, laughing ; 'but I was under the impression that it had been banished through the good offices of Loo ; and it's always a mistake—don't you think so?—to inquire into the causes of little tiffs and huffs ; inquiry is so apt to start them again. Let us assume that this one was causeless and say no more about it. Will you come in and have a cup of tea with Miss Spofforth ?'

Douglas declined both Miss Spofforth and the tea. He did not want either, and he did want—or, at any rate, he said so—to get to the bottom of a mystery which it had hitherto been beyond his capacity to solve. 'Would you mind telling me,' he asked, 'why you turned your back upon me in London ? I hope it wasn't because you thought me ungrateful in a political sense. I know you were kind enough to use your interest on my behalf, and I know how powerful your interest is ; but——'

'Oh, what a noodle you are !' interrupted Peggy, the colour rising into her cheeks. 'Who but you would have hit upon such a far-fetched notion as that I was out of temper with you for having trampled my modest influence under foot ! You can't have the confidence in your own merits that you ought to have, and you can have none whatsoever in mine, to talk that sort of nonsense. I'll answer your question, though I do rather mind answering it, and though I do think it a curiously stupid one. I turned my back upon you simply because I was informed that some people were saying that you had been seeing a little too much of my face. There !—now you know all about it and if you

like to burst out laughing, you have my full permission to laugh until you split your sides. Nevertheless, it remains true that I am not an old maid yet, and that you have seen fit to separate yourself from your wife, and that gossip counts for something. I used to think that I despised gossip; but I have advanced so far towards old-maidhood now that I don't care to brave it any longer.'

Instead of laughing, Douglas looked very grave, and sighed. 'I beg your pardon,' said he. 'I ought to have thought of that, and I ought not to have been so stupid. The truth is that, until quite lately, I have always cherished a sort of hope—or at least a sort of expectation—that my wife would give in and return to me.'

'Oh, she'll do that, if you will give her time.'

'No; she has not the slightest intention of returning, and, since nobody hears us, I will confess that I haven't the slightest wish that she should. The plain English of it all is that I have made a fool of myself and that I must bear the inevitable penalty. I am not going to whine; only I wish it wasn't a part of my penalty that our old friendship must come to an end.'

Peggy had many very sensible remarks to make in contravention of so gloomy a view. She pointed out the absurdity of concluding that a woman who has left her husband has necessarily ceased to love him; she advised concessions and advances which Douglas decisively refused to grant, and she argued at considerable length upon the time-honoured thesis that cutting off your nose to spite your face is a method of procedure which can neither benefit nor harm anybody, save the individual who chooses to adopt it. But she was put to silence when her companion told her in so many words that, whether his wife desired a separation or not, he did.

By this time Douglas had fetched his horse from the stable-yard and was leading him down the avenue, while Miss Rowley walked beside her departing visitor. He said:

'I'm not to be pitied for being parted from a woman who never really cared for me and for whom, perhaps, I never really cared: it's best as it is. But you may pity my loneliness, if you like, and, as I told you just now, I do think it rather hard lines that I should be compelled to give up my friends.'

'Oh,' returned Peggy, with a short laugh, 'that affliction isn't likely to be permanent, so far as I am concerned. All I have to

do is to marry, and then I shall be free to receive any friends who conduct themselves with ordinary discretion.'

Douglas was quite surprised to find how disagreeable this simple suggestion for the removal of a difficulty was to him. 'Are you thinking of marrying then?' he asked, in a tone of voice which all his efforts could not deprive of harshness.

'Miss Spofforth says it is high time that I thought of it,' answered Peggy, 'and, all things considered, I am inclined to agree with her. Liberty is sweet; but married women have as much liberty as girls nowadays; in some respects they have even more. So perhaps I had better not delay much longer to make somebody happy.'

'H'm! anybody in particular?'

'One out of three or four, I think. There are certainly three who would do very nicely.'

'That is as much as to say that you don't love any one of the three. Well, I must say that I am astonished. I should have thought that you were the last person in the world—quite the last—to tie yourself to a man whom you didn't love. You may take my word for it that you will repent of your bargain if you do; and I ought to know!'

During the remainder of the walk to Miss Rowley's lodge Douglas did all the talking, and it must be said for him that he did it extremely well. Nobody could have depicted the folly and sin of entering upon matrimony without love in more glowing and convincing terms than he employed, nor could anybody have spoken with more perfect sincerity. He wished for nothing else—what else could he wish for?—than to restrain his friend from falling into a grievous error; it could make no difference to him personally whether she married or remained single; and if, once or twice, the thought did cross his mind that he might have been less disinterested, but for the grievous error which he himself had committed, no such thought presented itself in distinct shape to him. Only the nature of the subject caused him to notice how pretty Peggy Rowley was, and to wonder that he had not noticed it before.

She dismissed him with the valedictory remark that his sentiments were unexceptionable, although they had not the fascination of originality.

'We all know,' said she, 'what marriage is in the ideal, and most of us know what it is in reality. I have lived so long and

seen so much that I can dispense with realised ideals. So can Mr. Innes and Florence Carey and ninety-nine mortals out of any chance hundred. As for you, you are all right ; because you are going to be Prime Minister some day, and as you won't be Prime Minister next year, or even ten years hence, you are comfortably provided for. Let us make the best of things as they are, and be as jolly as circumstances will allow us to be.'

Douglas, before mounting his horse, deemed it needful to explain that circumstances did not admit of any great future jollity on his part. He likewise represented himself in the light of a sad object-lesson, and even went so far as to hint that, if he could have recalled past years and made a fresh start, his ambition would have been of a very different kind from that ascribed to him. But Peggy did not appear to have the remotest comprehension of his meaning. She thanked him for his sage counsels, promising to give them due weight before she decided to fly in the face of them, and if, at the last moment, she permitted him to hold her hand rather longer than a mere friend and country neighbour would have been likely to do, that was only because he was not, and never could be, anything more than a mere friend and country neighbour to her.

She did not recognise a gentleman on a bay horse who trotted past her immediately after Mr. Colborne had left, nor did she suspect that he had witnessed her leave-taking from her friend and had drawn hasty and inaccurate deductions from what he had seen. The Marchese di Leonforte was quite the man to draw hasty and inaccurate deductions ; but then the Marchese di Leonforte was not at all the man who could have been expected to be in Buckinghamshire at that season of the year.

CHAPTER XLII.

LEONFORTE SMELLS A RAT.

THE epoch in which we live is remarkable chiefly for the facility of communication which it affords and the ease with which, not only this or that place, but the society of those who reside therein may be reached ; so that nobody is really unlikely to be encountered at any given spot or at any given time. The Marchese di Leonforte, for example, was not at all more unlikely

to be met with at Burcote Hall than many other people to whom the hospitality of the noble owner had been extended, and, as a matter of fact, he was now staying there, although Lady Florence had not considered the circumstance worthy of mention during her stolen interview with Frank Innes.

Leonforte had stayed in many country houses and had accumulated quite a large store of knowledge relating to the English aristocracy, its manners and its customs since his departure from London. He had had what the younger members of that aristocracy, whose position corresponded to his own, would have called an uncommonly good time of it; he had yachted in the Solent; he had shot grouse in Scotland and partridges in Norfolk; he had been taken to race-meetings at Newmarket and Doncaster; and his unvarying imperturbability had earned for him a very general and very liberal measure of regard. Certainly it had been no fault of his numerous entertainers that he had been extremely unhappy the whole time and that he had suffered from homesickness in a most aggravated form of that complaint. Sicily is a mournful place of abode during the arid hot season, when all nature lies wrapped in a death-like sleep; yet home is always home, and thither all poor, disenchanted human beings must needs turn their eyes longingly after the hope of earthly happiness has finally forsaken them. Leonforte, however, could not go home; because he had a mission to accomplish before quitting northern latitudes, and he would never have been able to forgive himself, had he abandoned it, vague though his designs and prospects were. He gladly accepted the invitation with which Lady Burcote, having learnt that he was in the adjoining county, favoured him; for he was aware that Burcote Hall was situated within easy reach of the estates owned respectively by Mr. Colborne and Miss Rowley, and he was anxious, in default of any more promising plan, to keep an eye upon those two enemies of his.

He heard, without surprise and without much interest, the news that an alliance had been arranged between Lady Florence Carey and Lord Galashiels: from what Frank Innes had told him, he had assumed that to be a foregone conclusion, and hereditary prejudice forbade him to feel any great sympathy with a young man who could so far forget himself as to dream of making money by singing in places of public amusement. Still his curiosity was momentarily aroused when, (having borrowed a horse out of his host's stables and having inquired his way to Swinford Manor,

with some indefinite notion of taking preliminary observations), he encountered Lady Florence driving homewards from the rendezvous that we know of. There was, of course, no reason in the world why the girl should not be exercising her ponies; nor would he have suspected that she was out upon any unavowable errand if she had not blushed so vividly as she bowed to him. Unfortunately, she did blush, and she looked so guilty that no Italian of ordinary intelligence could have helped forming a pretty shrewd surmise as to what she had been about.

Leonforte really did not care what she had been about; it was nothing to him whether she had been meeting Frank Innes or some other forbidden admirer. But he made a mental note of the incident, just as a scavenger will pick up the most worthless of jetsam, upon the off chance of its possessing some unforeseen value, and he amused himself with idle speculations as to the meaning of Lady Florence's shamefaced aspect until she and her affairs were driven out of his mind by a much more significant spectacle, which it was his privilege to witness.

He ought not to have been astonished, nor was he precisely astonished, to see Douglas Colborne and Miss Rowley standing, hand in hand, engaged in earnest conversation; but, somehow or other, this confirmation of his conviction had the effect of making him angry. He disliked them both and did not want either of them to be happy; but probably it was less on that account than because he had a quarrel with the whole world that he was disgusted by the sight of such illicit philanderings. He himself had fallen in love with a married woman, which was doubtless a sinful thing to do; but he had been punished by contemptuous dismissal from her house, and it seemed to him only fair and just that a similar punishment should be meted out to others who were every whit as sinful as he. The worst sin that can be committed admits of being rendered more heinous when hypocrisy is superadded. At the bottom of his heart, moreover, there lurked a suspicion, which was half pleasant, half painful to him, that the Countess still believed in, if she did not positively love, her husband, and that a report of the little scene of which he had been a spectator would hurt her about as much as anything was likely to hurt her. He almost wished to see her again, if only to convey that report and to watch the result. It would be an inadequate revenge; but it would be better than none.

Evil passions had, as has been said, been stirred up in his

heart; but he had cooled down again before he returned to Burcote Hall. He was nothing if not patient; he resolved to remain where he was and to keep his eyes and ears open, hoping that in process of time he would see or hear of something rather more compromising and conclusive than an interview between two neighbours whom all the world knew to be friends. For some days his patience went unrewarded, neither Mr. Colborne's name nor that of Miss Rowley being mentioned by any member of the house-party; but one morning he was startled by the mention of another name which he could never hear without emotion.

'The Countess Radna,' Lady Burcote told him, 'has written to beg that I will let Florry spend ten days or a fortnight with her in Paris. Very kind of her, I'm sure—especially as she didn't notice Florry's existence when she was in England, that I can remember. But she says she is always interested in girls who are engaged to be married, and it's true that she did come down very handsomely at the time of her sister-in-law's engagement to Colonel Percy.'

'The Countess Radna is well known for her kindness of heart and generosity,' observed Leonforte in his grave, monotonous voice.

'Well, yes; I believe she is. And she says something about shopping. Of course there are heaps of things which one can get in Paris and nowhere else, and it does sound rather like an opportunity which it would be a pity to let slip. I think I shall allow Florry to go.'

It will be perceived that the Countess had not misjudged the light in which her invitation would probably be regarded by Lady Florence's mother, and indeed, to render assurance doubly sure, she had hinted in no obscure terms at her intention of selecting some suitable wedding-gift for the promised bride.

Leonforte, conjecturing that there was more in this project than met the eye, and gathering from Lady Burcote's interrogative tone that he was being indirectly consulted, thought it best to say: 'I am sure, madame, that you may safely confide your charming daughter to the Countess's care.'

Lady Burcote laughed and answered: 'Oh, I am not afraid that Florry will be corrupted by the Countess, who, I have no doubt, is a paragon of virtue, though she doesn't seem to have hit it off with her husband. But perhaps that is because he is another paragon, and because two of a trade never agree. The

only thing that surprises me is that she should be in Paris at this time of year. I thought nobody went to Paris in autumn.'

Leonforte had also been under that impression, and he was inclined to doubt whether the Countess's departure from the customs of fashionable society could be accounted for solely by the generosity and kindness of heart which he had affirmed to be notorious. Still, as he was unable to fathom her design and saw no reason why he should attempt to defeat it, he contented himself with taking some mental notes and repeating that the Countess Radna was, to the best of his belief, an unexceptionable chaperon.

His faculties of observation being thus on the alert, he could not fail to be struck, during luncheon time, by a certain strangeness in Lady Florence's bearing. The girl was evidently excited, and a trifle apprehensive into the bargain. Her eyes were bright; her cheeks were slightly flushed; she talked more than usual; and when the Marchese, by way of experiment, asked her whether she was looking forward to her visit to Paris, she replied that she supposed she would have to go, since she had been invited, but that it was rather a nuisance to have to take such a long journey—which was obviously disingenuous. Leonforte, in short, smelt a rat; and it so chanced that in the course of the afternoon an episode occurred which helped him to arrive at something very near a surmise of the truth.

Everybody who has stayed in a country house has suffered from one of those dreadful drives to distant places of interest which it is so difficult to find any plausible excuse for declining. Leonforte, being a foreigner, did not look as sad and sullen as we do under such circumstances, when he was made to take his place in a four-in-hand break, driven by Lord Burcote, and was dismissed for three hours in company with half-a-dozen people to whom he had nothing at all to say; but he felt the hopeless dreariness of his position quite as much as any true-born Briton could have done, and he was equally conscious of an overpowering inclination to fall asleep. Perhaps he would have fallen asleep, had not his senses been stirred into wakefulness by an encounter in a narrow lane with a dog-cart in which two gentlemen were seated. The lane was very narrow; both vehicles were brought to a momentary standstill; and so there was ample time to notice that the driver of the dog-cart, who took off his hat and pulled his horse into the ditch, was no other than Mr. Colborne, while his companion, who shot an unmistakably inquiring glance at Lady Florence, was

beyond all doubt Frank Innes. Leonforte saw the glance; he saw Lady Florence's blush—unhappily, the best bred people are those whose nerves are highly strung, whose circulation is quick and whose skins are thin—and he formed his own conclusions. He said nothing at the time; but, after dinner that evening, he remarked carelessly to Lady Florence that he had thought Mr. Innes was still abroad.

'He has come home, it seems,' answered the girl, avoiding her interlocutor's eye.

'Yes, it seems so. But he will not, perhaps, stay very long in England?'

Lady Florence laughed nervously. 'One can't discover a person's intentions by looking at him, can one?' said she; 'and he allowed us no chance of hearing his voice this afternoon, you know. I daresay he will give you full information if you go over and call at Stoke Leighton.'

Leonforte was more than half inclined to adopt that suggestion; but he merely remarked that he feared a visit from him might not be altogether welcome to Mr. Colborne: whereupon Lady Florence made an incoherent murmur and effected her escape.

She fondly hoped that she had not betrayed herself; but, even though she should have done so, it was surely improbable that the Italian would go out of his way to serve her an unkind turn. She knew that he was upon friendly terms with Frank; he was said to be, or to have been, upon something more than friendly terms with the Countess Radna; and he could have no motive for wishing to thwart the designs of both of them.

From these reflections Lady Florence took comfort, as she journeyed, on the following day, towards London, Dover and Paris. She stood in need of all the comfort that she could give herself, because, to tell the truth, she was not a little alarmed at what she was doing. She had no lack of that species of courage which had always been one of the attributes of her family, which had led many male Careys to risk their lives in the battle-field or in the hunting-field and thoroughly enjoy the risk, while it had prompted not a few of their sisters to indulge in startling freaks of eccentricity; but if, on alighting from the railway-carriage at the Paris terminus, she had been met by Lady Burcote, and if Lady Burcote had said, 'Florence, walk round to the opposite platform, take your ticket and go straight home,' Florence would have obeyed at once. She would have been sorry for Frank and sorry for her-

self; but she would not have so much as thought of showing fight. If, indeed, it had been within her capacity to fight her mother, Lord Galashiels would not at that moment have been complacently informing his friends in Scotland that he had 'done it this time' and that he proposed to be 'worked off' before the end of the year.

Of course, however, Lady Burcote was not awaiting the arrival of the fugitive. Instead of her, a lady, enveloped in sables which the Czarina herself might have envied, stepped forward as soon as the train came to a standstill, the *Chef de gare* and other bedizened officials keeping a passage clear for her, and Lady Florence, after having been warmly embraced, was conducted without delay to a comfortably cushioned *coupé* and whirled off towards the Avenue Friedland. Her maid and her luggage, she was told, would follow presently; she would find all that she required for her immediate necessities on reaching her destination. People who affect to make light of the advantages of wealth are probably not very well acquainted with the annoyances of poverty; while some of us, who are poor and don't pretend to like being poor, might perhaps convince them of ingratitude to Providence if we could keep them kicking their heels for a good solid half-hour in that draughty waiting-room of the *Paris Gare du Nord* with the charms of which we are only too well acquainted. But that was far from being the lesson which the opulent Countess Radna desired to impress upon her companion. On the contrary, she wished Lady Florence to believe what, after all, is true enough, that there are many possessions infinitely more valuable than that of money, and that the love of a beloved fellow-being is unquestionably one of them.

'You are very fortunate,' she said, as they drove through the brightly-lighted streets; 'I wish I were you! Not that you won't have to put up with some troubles and inconveniences; but nothing that can be had without trouble and inconvenience is worth having at all. I am so glad you think Mr. Innes worth having; because you really make no mistake in thinking that he is.'

The girl murmured assent. 'I'm not afraid of trouble or inconvenience,' she remarked after a pause; 'only I'm horribly afraid of being caught and dragged home ignominiously. If only the whole thing could be got through and done with tomorrow!'

'Ah, that's impossible; but I don't think there is any need for you to be alarmed. All precautions have been taken. Besides, I have made up my mind to accomplish this marriage, and every-

body who knows me would tell you that when I make up my mind to accomplish a thing, I generally manage to be successful.'

Now, this was quite true, and it was not surprising that the Countess, who was really entitled to consider herself a very powerful personage, should have imagined that she could override certain legal provisions relating to the marriage of British subjects abroad. She had partially informed herself of these, had found them to be vexatious, and had airily resolved that they must be dispensed with on the present occasion. Dispensations, she assumed, were always obtainable when asked for by sufficiently exalted individuals: if any fuss was made, she would write a few lines to the English ambassador, who was temporarily absent from his post. That the English ambassador might not see his way to aiding and abetting a breach of the law did not strike her as a probable contingency. Does not an ambassador represent the person of his sovereign?—and are not even constitutional sovereigns above the law?

Lady Florence, fortunately, did not require to be reassured upon points which had scarcely troubled her. On the other hand, she could not help wondering very much why her kind hostess should be taking such pains on her behalf; and, after an extremely artistic little *tête-à-tête* dinner, (for it was not every day that Bickenbach and Dr. Schott were invited to dine at their patroness's table), she somewhat brusquely avowed her perplexity.

'I'm afraid it sounds awfully ungrateful,' said she; 'but I wish you wouldn't mind telling me what it all means. It seems so funny that you should care, one way or the other.'

'I don't wonder at your thinking it funny,' answered the Countess, with a good-humoured smile; 'but in reality I have several motives, not one of which has the smallest claim upon your gratitude. To begin with, I am honestly fond of Frank Innes, who has always struck me as the best specimen of an English gentleman that I have had the luck to encounter. Then I have a desire—a superstitious desire, if you like—to feel that I have done at least one good deed before I die.'

Here she came to such a protracted pause that Lady Florence remarked at length: 'You will have time to perform several thousands of good deeds before then, I should think.'

'I am afraid not. Everything leads me to believe that I have a mortal disease which may carry me off in a couple of months and which certainly won't spare me for another couple of years. I don't want to talk about that, though; because it is a disagreeable

subject. I was going to say that I have a third motive—an ignoble, but perhaps not an unnatural one. My husband, as you may be aware, professes also to have a great affection for his cousin; he patronises the young man in his sensible, immaculate way; he means to do all sorts of fine things for him eventually, if he behaves himself; but he wouldn't raise his little finger to help him to the one thing that he wants, because young men never know what is good for them. Well, such is my malignity that I look forward with a good deal of pleasure to the shock that my sensible, immaculate husband will receive when he hears of Frank's marriage.'

Lady Florence stared. 'But do you really think,' she asked wonderingly, 'that it will make so very much difference to Mr. Colborne?'

'For Heaven's sake, don't try to persuade me that it won't! Would you deprive me of my strongest incentive to benevolence? You would have shown more tact if, instead of saying that, you had pointed out that it can't make very much difference to me whether Mr. Colborne is pleased or displeased.'

'Ah, but I have no tact,' answered the girl; 'I'm utterly devoid of it. Mamma and my sisters and my governesses have always told me so.'

'Never mind; you are better off, perhaps, with honesty and that kind of bluntness which nobody objects to when it is practised by a woman whose face is as pretty as yours. Now I am going to send you off to bed; for my doctor makes me keep early hours, and you must be dead tired after your journey.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

PATERNAL AUTHORITY.

LEONFORTE, after he had witnessed Lady Florence's departure for France, did not deem it advisable to act upon her thoughtful suggestion that he should call at Stoke Leighton, with a view to obtaining information at first hand as to Frank Innes's intentions. All things considered, the information which he had already received seemed to him to be almost precise enough for practical purposes: besides which, he had a strong disinclination to hold any further parley with Mr. Colborne. He wanted, however, to see Frank, and a brief examination of time-tables led him to con-

clude that that young man would leave the neighbourhood by the 3.20 P.M. train for London, so as to dine comfortably at his club before taking the night-mail to Paris. People who are flying from the country with surreptitious matrimonial designs do not, he reasoned, commit the imprudence of travelling together, while neither is likely to be guilty of the discourtesy of keeping the other waiting longer than is necessary; and the accuracy of his judgment was proved by the fact that he had not been loitering for a quarter of an hour in the vicinity of the station adjoining Stoke Leighton, that afternoon, when the man for whom he was waiting drove up in a dog-cart, jumped down, tipped the groom and handed his belongings over to a porter.

Leonforte hastened to step forward, and was received, as he had expected to be, with feigned surprise and ill-disguised annoyance. There was not much time to be lost; so he disposed in a few words of Frank's perfunctory queries and said boldly:

'I trust you have not told anyone about this scheme of the Countess Radna's. It is a dangerous and difficult scheme, Mr. Innes, and you cannot be too careful to keep it a secret.'

Frank started, but fell into the trap instantly and unsuspectingly. 'Oh, you've heard of it from her, then?' said he. 'Yes, it's a bit risky of course; but it was our only chance, and I believe we shall pull through now. I haven't told Douglas, if that's what you mean, nor anybody else either. How could you think I should be such an ass! Did the Countess tell you to keep an eye upon me?'

Leonforte smiled. 'You are sometimes a little imprudent,' he answered, with judicious evasion; 'the Countess may be pardoned if she has felt some natural anxiety. The marriage, I presume, will take place as soon as you reach Paris?'

'Oh, dear, no; there are lots of bothering formalities to go through. As far as I can make out, we shall have to wait three weeks or a month. But that will be all right; because Lady Florence will be staying with the Countess, you know, and her people aren't so fond of her that they would mind if she remained away for a couple of months. Hullo! here comes the train. Well, good-bye, old chap. See you again some day, I hope.'

Leonforte, as he turned away, after bidding adieu to this singularly ingenuous youth, thought to himself, with a grim smile, that they would probably meet again rather sooner than one of them expected or desired. He meant to betray the ingenuous youth, and he had no scruples of conscience whatsoever about so doing.

Different nations have different codes respecting honour and morality. Had Frank spontaneously confided his secret to his Italian friend, the latter would have allowed himself to be cut in pieces before he would have revealed it to any human being: as it was, he considered himself perfectly free to make any use he pleased of facts which had come to his knowledge through his own dexterity; and he proposed to utilise them for the discomfiture of the Countess Radna. The scheme was her scheme, and that was a more than sufficient reason for wrecking it. When it should have been wrecked, he and she would still not be quits—far from it!—yet he would have done something, however little, towards paying off the heavy debt that he owed her. As for Frank Innes and Lady Florence Carey, it is to be feared that he did not trouble his head much about them. When all was said, they were subordinate personages. Insubordinate too, for the matter of that, and upon general grounds deserving of any chastisement that might befall them. It is not necessary to be an illogical Sicilian in order to appreciate the immense distinction which exists between one's own love affairs and those of one's neighbours.

Congratulating himself, therefore, upon the prospect that his long period of inaction was at last about to be broken, the Marchese returned to Burcote Hall, and, meeting his host upon the staircase shortly before the dinner-hour, took that opportunity to request a few minutes of private conversation.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Lord Burcote, after he had conducted the informer into his study and had listened to a statement the substantial accuracy of which seemed to be beyond question. He added a few ejaculations of a somewhat more forcible description, and then observed briefly: 'I must put a stop to this. I shall run across to Paris tomorrow and bring my daughter back with me.'

Leonforte intimated by a grave bow that that measure would, in his opinion, be a wise one to adopt; after which he took the liberty to propose himself as a travelling companion. 'For I also,' said he, 'intend to leave for Paris tomorrow.'

'Indeed?' returned Lord Burcote, glancing sharply and somewhat suspiciously at the other for a moment. 'I don't quite see the necessity for that.'

'Private and personal affairs, which require my attention——'

'Of course—of course, my dear fellow! I beg your pardon, I'm sure; one is apt to forget, when such confounded things as this happen, that other people may have private and personal affairs.'

And really I'm very much indebted to you for your prompt information. Not that such a crack-brained plot could possibly have succeeded or have been kept secret from us; but one naturally wishes to put the extinguisher upon it before the Embassy people and the parson and half a dozen others are let into the secret. You can understand how very important it is that the secret should be kept, and you will add infinitely to the obligation under which you have already placed me if you will keep it.'

Leonforte hastened to assure the anxious parent that Lady Florence's escapade should never be mentioned by him to anyone, save to those who were concerned in it.

'Thank you very much. And perhaps you'll be so kind as to say nothing even to Lady Burcote. It's quite a case of least said soonest mended, you see; and no questions will be asked about my going over to France, because I often do go there for a day or two to look at horses and that sort of thing. You're not a family man, or you would know what a nuisance domestic rows are; and although Florry has behaved like a perfect idiot, I don't want to be harder upon her than I can help. That singing fellow must be an average fool too; but, if I may be permitted to say so, your friend the Countess Radna appears to me to be by far the biggest fool of the lot.'

'I do not think that the Countess is a fool,' said Leonforte, who, for some reason which he would have been puzzled to explain, resented that description of his enemy.

'Well, well! She's a woman, at all events; and that's why I shall take devilish good care not to tell her what I think of her. In the course of my life,' added Lord Burcote, with a retrospective smile, 'I have had some little experience of women, and I will make so bold as to affirm that you ought *never*, under any circumstances, to let them know what you really think of them. You may flatter them outrageously or you may abuse them outrageously; but if you let them have the plain, unvarnished truth, by George, they'll make you wish you had held your tongue before they've done with you!'

Lord Burcote was so pleased with this astute and concise appreciation of feminine characteristics that he went upstairs to dress for dinner chuckling cheerfully, notwithstanding all the good reasons that he had for being seriously angry. He did not ignore the gravity of the *contretemps* which had occurred; he knew as well as anybody that a secret which is already shared by at least five

individuals must become public property in the long run, and he doubted very much whether Lord Galashiels was the man to marry a girl who had attempted to run away and marry someone else; but he was naturally good-humoured and courageous, while observation of life and humanity had rendered him a trifle cynical. It was certain that Florry would have to return home with him; it was equally certain that she would thankfully second his efforts to keep her mother in the dark; and, for the rest, one could but trust to luck. Luck had sometimes favoured Lord Burcote and sometimes deserted him: like Napoleon III. after Reichshoffen, and perhaps with rather more justification than that hapless potentate, he murmured to himself, '*Tout peut se réparer.*'

As he had anticipated, his announcement that he had 'heard something' which would necessitate his crossing the Channel aroused no comment in the family circle; for he was constantly hearing of something connected with turf matters which entailed sudden journeys. As for the Marchese di Leonforte, nobody in the house cared a straw whether he went or stayed; and in truth his visit had been quite as long as his hostess had intended it to be.

Without let or hindrance, therefore, these two ministers of destiny set forth to accomplish their task, and, on reaching the French capital, took up their quarters at the Hôtel Bristol; for Lord Burcote, like the generality of men who have no money to throw away, scorned petty economies. His lordship, knowing that there was no hurry, rose late on the following morning, looked in at two clubs of which he was a member, lunched with a French fellow-sportsman whom he encountered at one of them, and in the afternoon had himself driven to the Countess Radna's residence, where, as need scarcely be said, he was refused admittance. For this preliminary rebuff, however, he had been prepared; so he merely sent in his card a second time, with a thousand apologies for his importunity, which, he said, would have been inexcusable, had it not been a matter of sheer necessity that he should see the Countess for five minutes. He would endeavour not to intrude upon her for more than five minutes.

Immediately afterwards he was conducted into the presence of his fair antagonist, whose reception of him was gracious and amiable in the extreme.

'My dear Lord Burcote,' she cried, 'I am horrified to hear that you were nearly turned away from the door! The truth is that I am not very well and that I am not receiving visitors. I

could not divine that you were in Paris, could I? And Lady Burcote—is she with you?’

Lord Burcote laughed. As has been said before, he was a goodhumoured man, and he was tickled by an underlying inflection of anxiety which he detected in the Countess’s tone.

‘I am thankful to say that she is not,’ he replied. ‘Perhaps I may venture to assume that you also are thankful for that mercy? Because, although you could not have divined that I was in Paris, I am sure you must divine now what has brought me here, and I have no doubt that you agree with me in disliking noisy and unnecessary scenes. Far be it from me to load you with reproaches, Madame la Comtesse; I will only beg you to be so kind as to let my daughter know that I have come for her, and that she will accompany me presently to the Hôtel Bristol.’

The Countess, as soon as her visitor’s card had been brought to her, had of course prepared herself to do battle; but she had not expected a mode of attack at once so courteous and so peremptory, and she was momentarily disconcerted. ‘I suppose I may thank Mr. Colborne for this; I might have known that that silly boy would betray himself to his cousin!’ she exclaimed.

‘I am not aware of his having done so, and I sincerely trust that he hasn’t; though I quite agree with you that he is silly enough for anything. To be sure, he seems to have had advisers who were—well, let us say, not remarkable for excessive wisdom. Fortunately, one of them—your Italian *protégé*, Leonforte—was sane enough to come to me and tell me what was up. I need scarcely add that I shall keep my own counsel about this ridiculous affair, and I venture to hope that you and young Innes will be equally discreet. Because, really, you know, it reflects little credit upon the intelligence of any of the persons concerned in it. Now, if you will be so good as to send for Florry, I will not intrude upon you much longer.’

‘And suppose I decline to obey your orders, Lord Burcote?’

‘My dear lady, you can’t! I have an absolute right to the custody of my daughter, and you must be aware that I shall insist upon my right. Surely you do not wish to cover yourself and me with ridicule by compelling me to invoke the assistance of the police!’

The Countess set her teeth and tapped the floor angrily with her foot. ‘That cowardly, treacherous Sicilian!’ she exclaimed.

‘I am not here to defend him,’ observed Lord Burcote, with a smile; ‘you may wring his neck, for anything that I care. Only I wouldn’t be too hard upon him, if I were you; because he has

really rendered you, as well as us, a service. Your plan of marrying off my daughter without my consent was preposterously impracticable, and I am glad you don't know it, because that shows that you haven't yet taken the preliminary steps. Had you done so, Royston would at once have telegraphed to me, the whole story would have been sure to get into the newspapers, and for the next month or more we should have been the laughing-stock of all England. No! I think you must not be so ungrateful as to quarrel with your Sicilian.'

'I am not convinced,' returned the Countess, 'that things would have fallen out in the manner that you describe; but we will not waste time in discussing what might have been. What has happened is that we have been betrayed and that you are here to claim your daughter. Lord Burcote, neither you nor I are religious people. I cannot believe in Christianity, and you, I should imagine, are postponing the consideration of theological creeds until your death-bed, when they will cease to be inconvenient. Still I suppose we both have principles of a kind; right and wrong are not absolutely meaningless words to us; we admit that certain proceedings are disgraceful. Doesn't it strike you as a disgraceful proceeding to force a daughter of yours into the arms of a man whom she hates so much that she has run away from him and to drag her away by main force from a man whom you know that she loves?'

Lord Burcote widened out his mouth and thrust his chin forward, as his habit was when any man or woman tried to steal a march upon him. 'You must excuse me,' he replied, 'if I remind you that the responsibility of conducting my family affairs rests solely upon my own shoulders, which are, I believe, broad enough to sustain the burden. You may rest assured that I shall do just exactly what I think fit to do.'

The Countess cast a scornful glance at him, and, without making any rejoinder, rang the bell. The servant who appeared in answer to her summons took a message from her to Lady Florence, and presently the girl entered the room, looking very pale and frightened. Her protectress stepped up to her side, before Lord Burcote could utter a word, and said:

'My dear, your father has heard everything and has come here to take you home. He asserts that the law gives him power and authority over you—which is true, I believe. But there is no reason for you to surrender, provided that you have the courage

to tell him that you will not leave me and that you will marry the man whom you have chosen. He talks of calling in the police; but he is far too much afraid of ridicule to have recourse to such methods. I promise you, in his presence, that I will make it my business to provide you and your husband with an income which will at least free him from the obligation of settling a single *centime* upon you. All you have to say is that you refuse to stir: then we shall see what will happen next.'

But alas! poor Lady Florence's valour was not equal to the demand made upon it. She thought of Frank, whom she had seen that morning and whose sanguine spirits had buoyed up her own for the time being; she thought of the odious Galashiels, whose wife she inwardly vowed that she never could and never would become; she tried hard to believe that the Countess was right and that she had but to assert herself in order to conquer; yet, somehow or other, she could not bring herself to say what she wished to say; and when, after a helpless and appealing glance at her father, whose countenance remained impassive, she opened her lips at length, it was only to gasp out feebly:

'Does Mamma know?'

Lord Burcote rose and advanced. 'Heaven be praised,' he replied, 'your dear mother is still in blissful ignorance of all this; and in ignorance she shall remain. I promise you that; and it seems to me that my promise is a rather more practical one than the Countess Radna's. Come, my dear girl, you know very well that I don't enjoy bullying you; but—what can't be cured must be endured. If I were to talk from now till midnight, I could not put the case more truthfully or more convincingly. Come with me you must; and I do hope you will have the sense to come without making a fuss about it.'

'I cannot marry Lord Galashiels,' said Lady Florence, with tremulous firmness.

'Very well, my dear; you and your mother and Galashiels must settle that question among you. I never insisted upon your marrying the man. But I do forbid you to marry young Innes, and I venture to prophesy that you will live to thank me for having exercised my right of veto as regards him.'

The girl shook her head.

'Well, at all events, you will live to thank me for having shown some discrimination in getting you out of an uncommonly awkward hole. It will be all right at home: we will say that you

didn't like Paris, or that your hospitable entertainer was unwell—I very much regret to hear from her that she is unwell—or this, or that, or t'other. But we won't tell the truth.'

Ten minutes later Lady Florence had quitted the Avenue Friedland with her father. Her boxes were to be sent after her to the Hôtel Bristol, and she would start for England either that night or on the following morning, Lord Burcote announced. The Countess was very angry; but what was the use of being angry? She was not even sure that there would be any great use in delivering a message with which she had been entrusted at the last moment.

'Tell Frank,' Lady Florence had whispered, 'that I can't help deserting him now, but that I will never marry anybody else. Perhaps he won't believe me after my having accepted Lord Galashiels once; but he may safely believe me, all the same.'

(To be continued.)

